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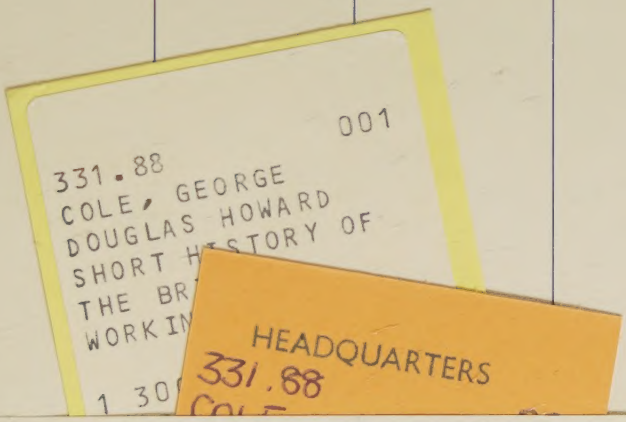

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A Short History of the British
Working Class Movement
1848–1900

A Short History of the British Working Class Movement 1789-1927

by

G. D. H. Cole

Volume II. 1848–1900

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LONDON: GEORGE ALLEN AND UNWIN LIMITED & THE LABOUR PUBLISHING COMPANY LIMITED

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Published 1926.
New Edition 1927

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PREFACE

I HAD intended to complete in this second volume my short survey of the history of the British Working-class Movement. But, as soon as I began to reduce to order my accumulated material, I saw that it would be impossible to do this without making the second volume nearly twice as long as the first. It seemed, moreover, that there was a natural break in the story just about the end of the century. The Victorian age appeared to be a chapter complete in itself, and deserving to be dealt with as a rounded whole. I therefore decided to make a second break about 1900, and to complete my study in three volumes instead of two.

Just as, in the first volume, I was trying to present a coherent account of the successive waves of working-class revolt against the new economic and social conditions created by the Industrial Revolution, so here I have attempted to present a picture of the new working-class movements which, from about 1850 onwards, based themselves on an acceptance of Industrialism, and an attempt to make the best of the new structure of economic society. For a time this acceptance was to a great extent an acceptance, not only of Industrialism, but also of that individualist Capitalism in which the new industrial order was first embodied. Later, it found expression in a Socialism which, hostile to Capitalism, was no less definitely based on accepting Industrialism as the basis of social organisation.

In my first volume I had to stress the unity of the entire Working-class Movement—the common basis and the close actual connection of the early experiments in Trade Unionism, in Co-operation, and in Radical political reform. Here, in dealing with the Victorian era, I have rather to lay stress on the division of the workers' movement into a number of distinct and separate expressions. Co-operation and Trade Unionism drifted apart; independent working-class political action was for a time submerged. The

various working-class movements, pursuing strictly limited aims, rarely felt the need for united effort or community of policy. But, as the " Golden Age " of Victorian Capitalism passes away and gives place to the new age of Imperialism and international economic rivalries, we shall see the aims and attitude of the working-class movements gradually changing, and the idea of united organisation again emerging side by side with the re-emergence of a wider, anti-capitalist aim.

As in the previous volume, I have aimed only at an outline study, and have excluded footnotes and references to sources. I wish to emphasise the point that the books mentioned at the end of each section are no more than a few selected references for further reading, confined for the most part to works which are easily accessible. In this volume, they fail at a good many points to cover the ground, for there are still many uncharted tracts in the history of the workers during the Victorian era. There is no study at all of working-class politics during this period, and no adequate account of Trade Union development. I have been driven, therefore, to a considerable use of old newspapers, pamphlets and reports. Especially have I drawn largely on the valuable collection of books and papers originally made by George Howell, and now housed in London at the Bishopsgate Institute.

G. D. H. Cole.

Oxford, 1926.

NOTE

In this new edition, I have made a few revisions in the light of criticism and further study. I have to thank those who have drawn my attention to points needing amendment.

G. D. H. C.

Oxford, 1927.

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTORY

1. The Second Phase
2. The "Golden Age"

I

The Second Phase

The first volume of this study carried the record of the British Working-class Movement to the year 1848. This seemed a convenient stopping-place because the Chartist failure of that year marked a decisive change in the character of the movement. There was a deep significance in the fact that the " year of revolutions " in Europe produced in this country no more than a feeble and half-hearted demonstration on Kennington Common. Up to that point, the story of the British workers is one of successive waves of revolt against the rising capitalist order. Against the developing strength of the new employing class one wave after another was shattered in vain. The Corresponding Societies echoed the stirring cries of the French Revolution; the Luddites broke the hated new machines, only to be broken in their turn. The working-class Radicals threatened revolution as the alternative to Manhood Suffrage, and were put off with a Reform Act which seated their masters firmly in power. The great " Trades Union," under Owen's millennial guidance, vainly tried to strike its way to the Co-operative Commonwealth. And finally the Chartists, reviving the old cry of Manhood Suffrage as the slogan of a movement based on economic distress, found themselves beaten off the field of propaganda by the Anti-Corn Law League, and reduced to an impotent sect out of tune with the new spirit of the times.

Revolt failed. Vainly did the workers kick against the pricks of the new order, which was all the time steadily and swiftly growing in power. Again and again they tried to organise a separate movement of their own, and to enforce their will upon the country. There are two outstanding reasons for their failure, either sufficient in itself. In the first place, they could not know what they wanted, or at any rate how to set about the getting of what they wanted. Their movements were, for the most part, reactions of starvation

and despair, rather than constructive attempts at economic reorganisation. A few leaders, like Owen, could see visions of the Socialist future; a few realists, like Place, tried to instal reformism and the Liberal-Labour alliance long before their time. But most even of the leaders were either, like O'Connor, devoid of any policy at all, or, like Cobbett, harking back to the old days before the coming of the monster, steam, with his insatiable call for human sacrifice.

After all these leaders the procession of misery followed blindly. The wretched slaves of steam caught a glimpse, no doubt, of Owen's vision; but they were far more deeply stirred when Cobbett, or even O'Connor, seemed to beckon them back to the land from which they had been driven. Helpless in the grip of the new industrialism which they hated the more because they did not understand it, they were ready to throw in their lot with any movement which was at least a movement of revolt. But, gradually, failure made them tired. A new generation arose, born amid the smoke and noise and filth of the spreading factory towns, and accepting wage-labour at the machine as its appointed lot. The call of the fields had grown fainter; the clanking and puffing of the engines had deadened their ears. They had grown only too prepared to accept the new order as inevitable, and to make the best of it.

It was, indeed, impossible for the working class of the early nineteenth century to devise a policy at once practical and constructive. They were too weak. The machine was steadily dispensing with the old craftsmen's skill, and enrolling women and children as machine-minders to beat down the wages of the men. The cheapness of goods which was the gift of the machines made a return to the old order impracticable; and in the new order children and mothers waged war perforce against fathers to beat down the standard of life. Cobbett and O'Connor were, in fact, radical reactionaries; and Owen, who saw the true remedy in the co-operative control of the new industrial forces, was compelled to be Utopian because he was calling on the workers to attempt a task far beyond their strength.

The second cause of failure is the other side of the same medal. Where the workers were too weak, Capitalism was far too strong. It was not, indeed, in the early part of the century a fully

stabilised or established order; but it was gaining strength all the time. Its leaders were imbued with a tremendous consciousness of power. The machines, which were the workers' masters, were their servants, and the sense of power and achievement which the machines put into their minds gave them irresistible force and courage. They believed in their mission, and regarded the wealth which poured in upon them as the sign of their triumphant achievement. They had made ten bales of cotton grow where one grew before; they were covering sea and land with ships, railways, factories, mines and counting-houses—the tokens of the new plenty. It seemed a small thing to them that men, women and children laboured without rest for a pittance in order to create this wealth, or that the new factory towns were noisome dens of corruption and disease. Give them a free hand, and the stream of commodities would gush forth in yet greater abundance, until the whole land ran with wealth. Give them a free hand, and all things else would be added unto the people. They resented, as blind folly and wanton obstruction, the revolts of the workers against their misery; they demanded that Labour, in its own best interest, should be forcibly restrained from combination or independent political activity. The stream of production could be swelled to the full only if capital flowed freely into it. Saving was the cardinal virtue. But higher wages would dry up the flow of saving, and check the increase of wealth. Consumption must be kept down, in order that production might increase without limit.

The topsy-turviness of this view, which strikes us forcibly to-day, could hardly be apparent to most of these early capitalists. The markets of the world were all before them; their cheap goods undercut every possible competitor. But, competing fiercely one against another, they were compelled one and all to be forever cheapening their goods yet more. A little on the wage, or a little off the working day, seemed to threaten each individual master with ruin. And, as cheapness was their god, and competition the key to cheapness, every cost must be kept down to the lowest point. The workers, in their own interest, must work long for little, in order that the goods they bought might get ever cheaper.

It is no wonder that men in this mood, and with the sense of achievement behind them, were strong and resolute in pushing

the policy which seemed to meet their needs. It is no wonder they were callous about the sufferings of the poor. For their eyes were on the future; they saw the Golden Age of Capitalism coming, and believed they knew how to reach it by their own strength. They brushed opposition aside. The Reform Act had given them political power; and from 1832 onwards they used it in masterful fashion.

The early working-class movements failed, then, because they were too weak and because the rising force of Capitalism was too strong. But, if these early struggles seem vain and fruitless, the workers had really no alternative. Their attempts to organise Trade Unions for collective bargaining met with insuperable hostility from employers who denied them all rights of negotiation. Even after the repeal of the Combination Acts the law of conspiracy and of master and servant still exposed them to constant legal repression. Their attempt to join forces with the middle-class Radicals had produced the Reform Act of 1832, which left them voteless and placed political power firmly in the hands of their masters. Their agitations for factory reform met with the most uncompromising opposition from those very Radicals whose lead they were asked to follow. Every means of moderate advance seemed closed to them; there was nothing for it but a kicking against the pricks which had at least the merit of keeping hope alive in their hearts.

For some time before the middle of the century, this situation was slowly changing. The first sign of the change was the Anti-Corn Law agitation, which steadily drew the workers away from Chartism to the pursuit of a concrete and practicable reform. Here at last was something on which the interests of workers and employers appeared to be the same. The workers, oppressed by low wages, wanted cheap food and above all a steadying of corn prices which would check violent fluctuations in the standard of living. And the employers wanted free trade in corn, both as a means to the maintenance of low wages, and because corn was the easiest form of payment for British manufactured exports that the foreigner could make. The anti-capitalist agrarians, like Bronterre O'Brien, denounced the League as a plot for the reducing of wages; but cheap corn was an appealing cry. The Anti-Corn Law League successfully organised under middle-class leadership the

main body of the workers. Chartism lost its hold; and in 1846 Peel gave way, and broke the Conservative Party. The League had made the way plain for a new working-class policy, under which the workers would rest content with picking up the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table.

Of course, for the capitalists there was far more at stake in the Free Trade agitation than the mere repeal of the Corn Laws. They wanted just as much the free importation of the raw materials of industry, the unfettered carriage of goods overseas, the final removal of all restrictions on the course and organisation of trade. The repeal of the Navigation Acts of 1849 and 1854, the sweeping away of import duties in 1853 and 1860, the free development of capitalist organisation under the Companies Acts of 1855 and 1862, followed as the logical sequels of the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846. But it suited the employers of labour best to wage their war first and foremost as a campaign against the Corn Laws; for on that issue alone could working-class support be ensured, and a great popular movement built up. The repeal of the Corn Laws was the sign, as List might have pointed out, of the capitalist coming-of-age; and among the gifts made to Capitalism on that auspicious occasion was the surrendered sword of the working-class Movement.

This coming-of-age was, indeed, signalised by a change in the character of Capitalism itself. Capitalism had sown, or rather "saved," its wild oats; and it was, in the 'forties, settling down already to the administration of its inheritance. In the early days, even the successful employer was very often at his wit's end for money. He saw the chance of extending his business, he wanted a constant stream of fresh capital in order to instal the latest new machines. But, unless he could accumulate enough (at his workers' expense) out of the profits of his business, whence was the fresh capital to come? There was no great investing public ready to take up shares in his enterprise; for, though gasworks and other public utilities, and later railways, were teaching the middle and upper classes the lesson of joint stock investment, the joint stock form was hardly applied as yet to industry proper, and limited liability, the secret of its rapid extension, was still denied by the law. It was under these conditions that the "abstinence" of workers and capitalists alike presented itself as a sovereign duty;

for only by putting every possible penny back into the business could its maintenance and extension be guaranteed.

Before the middle of the century, this situation was changing. The middle class had grown very greatly; for both the shop-keeping and the professional classes had been increasing by leaps and bounds. The landowning classes, though they still perhaps held their noses, were condescending to invest their money in industry, and to share in the high profits which accrued. It was easier to find money for economic development, and therefore less indispensable to practise "abstinence" to the extent of privation. The big employers had, of course, launched out early as country gentlemen with fine estates of their own; the smaller employers began to follow this lead, to move into comfortable houses, to set up carriages, and in short to become gentlefolk of the solid Victorian kind.

Under these new conditions, there was even the less need to come quite so sharply down on any attempt by the workers to improve their position. Peel's Factory Act was passed in 1844, and the Ten Hours Act in 1847: the worst excesses of overwork at the expense of the women and children in the textile factories were over. Wages began slowly to rise, and the intensity of the employers' opposition to working-class combinations gradually diminished. And, so far from being ruined by these changes, the owners of industry found themselves getting richer than ever—trade and production advancing by leaps and bounds, and the profits derived from them growing larger at an unprecedented rate.

There were thus strong inducements on both sides to a change of policy and tactics. The employers could afford to ease off a little the intensity of the exploitation of labour, and to deal less savagely with attempts at working-class combination. And the workers, to whom hitherto Capitalism had seemed to offer nothing but an endless prospect of undiminished misery, began to see gleams of hope in the future. They had long been told that if they would only work with the grain of capitalism instead of working against it, they would get their share of the good things it had to offer. They began at length to believe, and, instead of fighting against capitalism, to accept it as an accomplished fact, and to make the best of their lot within it. The New Co-operation

of 1844, the New Unionism of 1850, the new Friendly Society Movement recognised and encouraged by the Acts of 1846 and 1855, were all signs of this changed spirit—all attempts to work with and within the capitalist order instead of attempting its overthrow. The lamb had been shorn; it remained for Capitalism to temper the wind.

The change, of course, did not come all at once. Radicals like Bright and Cobden, who successfully led a mixed movement of the working and middle classes to the conquest of Free Trade, remained blind to the need for factory reform, and hostile industrially to the Trade Unions whose political backing they were eager to secure. When the skilled workers, from 1850 onwards, began to organise stable Trade Unions based on a moderate and conciliatory programme, the mass of employers were still unwilling to meet them or to recognise the need for collective bargaining. The old spirit died hard; but it was dying. The conception of the common interest of employers and employed was slowly coming into its own.

This, as we shall see, does not mean that the workers surrendered the right to strike, or to carry on either industrial or political agitation on their own behalf. But the agitations of the 'fifties, 'sixties and 'seventies were unlike those of earlier times in that, with the solitary exception of the "First International," they were all designed to promote limited and specific reforms, and had behind them no general programme or policy hostile to the capitalist order. During these decades the workers fought many hard battles; they made great new movements, and built them up on solid foundations of collective loyalty. But they neither created nor inspired any new philosophy or body of social ideas. The philosophy of these leaders was not a capitalist philosophy; but it postulated the acceptance of Capitalism and did not seek to overpass the limits which that acceptance implied.

This inevitably makes the working-class movements of this second stage of development far harder to describe than those which were outlined in the first volume of this study. For those earlier movements were complete in themselves, and represented complete and independent stages in the development of working-class policy and opinion. These newer movements, on the other hand, are incomplete because they are complementary. They

represent the reverse of the cloth of which the capitalist side shows the pattern. They have meaning and purpose only in relation to the stage which capitalist development had reached. And, as we shall see later on, they changed their form and colour as soon as Capitalism, under stress of a fresh stage in economic development, was woven into a new pattern of Imperialist design.

So far, however, we have to do only with that capitalist golden age which stretches from about the middle of the nineteenth century to the late 'seventies—the period of Free Trade triumphant, of swiftly expanding markets at home and abroad, of complacent contemplation of a national prosperity which seemed to be boundless and inexhaustible. This was the true Victorian Age, aptly symbolised in the handsomely upholstered comfort of the Victorian middle-class home, with the dark, decent, expressive ugliness of its mahogany, with its crowded drawing-rooms and its sentimental ballads, its port wine and its tea—all these the products of a civilisation built on the proud assurance of a middle class that felt itself the maker of all these good things, and not least the maker of its own successful virtue.

To this time belongs too the emergence of the artisan from the sheer squalor of Industrial Revolution days. If the employer had his plush and mahogany, the skilled artisan began to ape him with his tiny parlour, a symbol too sacred for common use. If the employer had his investments, the skilled artisan was beginning to have his few pounds in the " Co-op." or the penny bank, and his stake in the funds of his Friendly Society or his Trade Union. His virtues were those of his employer, on a smaller scale; he too felt himself a self-made man, and shared in the complacency of the times. He too hoped that, every day and in every way, he and his country would get richer and richer and richer.

Yet he was far from rich—a mere shade above the line of absolute poverty. And below him there was still a mass of unskilled or unorganised labour too poor to raise its head. The skilled artisans, however, had too much to do in making the best of things for themselves to be very solicitous about the welter beneath their feet. There was a chance for them; but unless they strained every nerve to take it the chance would be lost, and perhaps they would be thrust back among the failures—a sore disgrace as well as a dreadful privation. So that, whereas in

earlier times the skilled workers, subjected to the common exploitation, put themselves at the head of the entire working class in the struggle for better things, this rising class of skilled workers was mainly concerned to look after its own narrower interest. Its charity began at home; and it had little to spare for the bottom dog. Its Trade Unions, its Friendly Societies, even its successful Co-operative Movement, were carried on under conditions which forbade access to the poorer strata among the workers. Trade Union contributions were too high, Friendly Societies demanded an exercise of " thrift " which was beyond the reach of the less skilled operatives; the Co-operative Society called for cash from men and women who were compelled to buy on credit if they were to live at all.

This restricted scope of the new working-class movements made them far less disposed to unify their forces, or to pursue any common course of action. During the earlier stages of the Industrial Revolution the workers were driven together by a common oppression; under the changing conditions of the Victorian age they were led apart by the severalty of their aims. Co-operation and Trade Unionism, almost one in their early stages, became two separate and almost unconnected movements. Each Trade Union, and even each local Co-operative Society, pursued its own course without feeling much need for any common basis of action. Political activity for a time almost disappeared; for after the collapse of Chartism no new movement speedily arose, and after the repeal of the Corn Laws there was no popular agitation under middle-class leadership round which the workers could rally.

Gradually, however, we shall see the forces drawing together again. Co-operators were led to combine, first for the purposes of wholesale trade and production, and then for the pursuit of common political and economic aims. The movement for the extension of the franchise, temporarily eclipsed after the collapse of Chartism, revived as a purely constitutional and reformist demand, based on the improving status and growing respectability of Labour. The Trade Unions combined, both to resist dangerous attacks levelled against them and to secure a recognised legal status corresponding to their moderate and constitutional policy. But all these unifying movements of the 'sixties were quite unlike

the earlier agitations, in that there was in them not even the most indirect threat of revolutionary action, and no aim beyond the securing of certain defined and limited reforms.

In the remaining section of this chapter, and in the next, there will be described in more precise terms, first the changing economic conditions of the Golden Age of Free Trade Capitalism, and secondly the new working-class movements which arose as the response to these conditions. We shall have to trace the rise of the new Co-operation from the Rochdale Pioneers of 1844, and of the new Trade Unionism from the " new model " of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in 1851, and in bare outline the growth of the great Friendly Societies which were certainly no less influential in forming the character and outlook of the Victorian working class.

In this survey, we shall be studying the real beginnings of modern organisation. Owenism and Chartism speak to us across the years in a dead language; but the direct descendants of the Rochdale Pioneers and of the " new model " Trade Unions are still with us to-day. These Victorian pioneers built narrow houses; their plans lacked the space and grandeur of the earlier conceptions. But they built on firm foundations—so firm that, even under the vastly changed conditions of our own time, their buildings take a deal of breaking, and their policy still survives, built round and over by the exponents of more up-to-date methods. In their limitation was their strength, and in the sources of their strength the cause of their limitation. From the time when they begun to build, the British working-class movement has a steady and continuous history.

II

The "Golden Age"

The years between 1850 and the middle 'seventies were, taken as a whole, a period of extraordinary and progressive prosperity. To the "Hungry Forties" succeeded the sleek and prosperous 'fifties. The 'sixties, chequered by the terrible Cotton Famine of 1862-3 and the severe financial crisis of 1867, were yet a time of still more rapid advance. And, in the early 'seventies, with trade and production booming as never before, the cup of wealth seemed like to run over. There were few who anticipated the severe depression which, breaking upon the country in the middle 'seventies, lasted, with only a brief intermission, for something like a decade.

In 1850, these set-backs were still far away; and Great Britain was entering upon a rich and pleasant harvest. In the 'thirties and 'forties, to the accompaniment of great hardship and unrest, the seeds of this prosperity had been sown. All over the country, a great network of railways had been built, so that the entire interior had been opened up to swift and easy communication. The mercantile marine had advanced by leaps and bounds; and the application of steam had immensely added to the swiftness and certainty of voyages. The first Industrial Revolution had been primarily a change in the methods of production, heaping up a store of goods which roads, canals and sailing-ships were hard put to it to bear away to profitable markets. The Second Industrial Revolution was primarily a change in the methods of transport, opening up fresh fields of profitable trade to the producer, as well as fruitful chances for investment of the accumulating capital of the rich and middle classes. Steam power had conquered the handicraft producer first; thereafter it out-horse-powered the horse and defied the winds and waves.

The growth of railways had a hundred decisive social effects. The building of them mobilised men in large masses, and shifted

them constantly from place to place. The " mobility of labour " was greatly increased; a fresh stream of migration from the villages set along the line of the new railroads. A huge iron industry was built up largely for the supply of railway equipment and rolling stock; a new class of *entrepreneurs* and contractors arose to finance and direct these developments. There were many wild-cat schemes, and many insane bursts of speculation. But, whoever gained and lost by their construction, the railways were thenceforth there, and for transport as well as for production British industry was equipped with power and resources which placed it far ahead of every competitor.

In 1850, though new lines were still a-building fast, the great period of construction was over, and that of consolidation already well advanced. The linking up of the railways into larger groups and systems, and the provision of through running facilities for long distance traffic, were every year making the whole country more nearly a single economic unit and increasing its production and commercial power.

At the same time, the great shipping lines began to be formed. The early 'fifties were a time of extraordinarily rapid development of shipping and shipbuilding; and the growing demand again reacted favourably on the industries producing metals and machinery. Hitherto, the textile trades had been almost unchallengeably supreme; and their dominance was hardly to be shaken for some time yet. But already the metal trades were claiming a place beside them. And close upon iron followed coal, now rising to an independent and important status among industries. It was no accident that in the 'fifties the engineers, and in the 'sixties the miners, occupied the centre of the Trade Union stage.

These great industrial developments called for a larger and steadier stream of capital and credit than earlier methods of organisation had made possible. And these were forthcoming out of the growing resources in the hands of the wealthier classes. The Bank Charter Act of 1844, by regulating the note issue and putting the banking system firmly on its feet, provided an assured basis for credit, and strengthened the position of London as the world's commercial and financial centre. At the same time the legal recognition of the joint stock form of organisation for ordinary

business, and the concession of limited liability to shareholders in 1855, greatly simplified the raising of capital and broadened the basis of industrial and commercial investment. Industrial ownership ceased to be the prerogative of a small class of *entrepreneurs;* the entire middle and upper class were drawn into investment, first in the new railway stocks, and before long in all manner of industrial holdings. Even workers whose wages began to provide a small margin above current needs were led into the pursuit of investment. The " Working-class Limiteds " grew up as joint stock companies owned chiefly by manual workers; while the expanding Co-operative movement provided a non-profit-making investment for a growing mass of working-class savings.

Agriculture, as well as industry, enjoyed a " Golden Age." The prognostications that Free Trade would ruin the farmers and landlords were by no means realised in fact. The price of corn was stabilised rather than reduced, and both rents and farming profits rose. There was, indeed, a certain shifting from the cultivation of wheat crops to stock and dairy farming; for the growing consumption of meat and milk in the towns opened up a highly profitable demand. This in time reacted on the position of the labourers; for stock farming needed less labour than arable, and the supply of workers in the villages became redundant. While, therefore, profits and rents remained high, wages were still very low, and there was a steady migration from the villages to various forms of industrial work or even overseas. The railways, in particular, absorbed a large mass of surplus agricultural labour. When Joseph Arch came to organise the rural workers in the early 'seventies, there was certainly no sign that they had shared in the prosperity of their masters.

Meanwhile, corn flowed in freely from abroad to feed the rapidly increasing population, and its price, if not reduced, was certainly stabilised and prevented from rising by the freedom of trade. This in turn steadied wages and conditions of employment; for corn, as the labourers' principal means of life, was also the most vital raw material of industry. Other raw materials soon shared in the new freedom, and by 1860 Great Britain had gone further still, and, by abolishing the duties on manufactured imports, had become wholly a Free Trade country. Nay, more, Cobden's success in negotiating with France the Commercial Treaty of that

year was widely greeted as the beginning of an era of universal Free Trade, in which all other countries would follow the British example. In France, Bastiat loudly echoed as universal truths the Free Trade doctrines of the English classical economists; in Germany, List's warnings that Free Trade might suit England, because she could with the aid of machinery undercut all competitors, but would not suit those who sought to imitate her success, passed for the time almost unheeded.

In the towns, living conditions were becoming rather more tolerable. The Public Health Act of 1848, and the Local Boards of Health established under it, though it had needed the cholera to get them accepted, were real steps forward in the development of sanitary legislation; and the Clauses Acts of 1847 marked a period of advance in the provision of vital public utilities such as gas and water supply. Factory conditions were slowly improving under the Acts of 1844, 1847, 1850 and 1853, and with the Acts of 1850 and 1860 protective legislation began to be applied to the mines also. The whole period from 1847 onwards was one of considerable activity in social and industrial legislation. Public education, it is true, was to be held back until 1870 by the religious controversy; but the number of schools was steadily growing, and illiteracy markedly on the decrease. Between 1851 and 1861 State grants for education in England and Wales rose from £150,000 to £813,000, and the illiteracy rate fell for men from 30.7 per cent. to 24.6, and for women from 45.2 to 34.7. And in the two following decades, despite the temporary adverse effects of Mr. Lowe's code in the 'sixties, the improvement in educational standards was more than maintained.

It must not, however, be supposed that during this prosperous period wages were high. In the 'fifties, the slight advance in wage rates failed to keep pace with the rise in prices, and in the 'sixties hardly more than this leeway was made up. Not till the early 'seventies was there any large advance in wage rates, measured in purchasing power, and this was enjoyed for but a few years before the coming of the great depression.

Nevertheless, the condition of labour certainly improved. Employment was better and more regular; for there were many years of prosperity, and few of slump. A large proportion of workers tended to rise into the skilled grades, and to enjoy the

higher wages corresponding to their increased skill. Working hours were to some extent lessened, and factory conditions improved. There remained a morass of unskilled labour; but skilled labour was able to raise its head, and largely to imbibe, with increased self-respect, a philosophy of thrift and self-help modelled on that of the masters.

For the upper and middle classes, the growth of prosperity was undoubtedly very great. In the Census of 1851, the professional classes numbered only 2.2 per cent. of the population. In 1871, they had reached 3.9, and in 1881 6.2 per cent. The average yield of a penny income tax more than doubled between 1850 and the end of the 'seventies. House rents and land prices both advanced very rapidly. Apart from the great fortunes which were being made out of industry and commerce, the middle classes were rapidly growing and steadily consolidating their position. And to the profitable fields for investment at home was being added an increasing mass of investment overseas. British capital was already flowing, in the wake of British goods, into the markets of the world: the railways of Europe and America were being built largely with British capital, with British material, and under British direction.

In 1850, men already looked back to the Industrial Revolution as a distant historical event. They were living in a new epoch, the inheritors of the wealth and the productive power of which the eighteenth century had laid the foundations. The Great Exhibition of 1851 was a triumphant celebration of British prosperity, present and to come. *The Times* described the year as one of " unexampled prosperity," and repeated the phrase as applying equally to 1852. The good trade lasted till 1856, and the slump which accompanied the financial crisis of 1857 lasted only two years. Then followed eight years of good trade; for even the appalling Cotton Famine of 1862-3 did not suffice to upset the general prosperity of business. The slump of 1866, again due mainly to financial causes, of which the failure of Overend and Gurney is the outstanding example, lasted less than three years, and then gave place to a new prosperous period of six years' duration. Only thereafter, in 1874, came the premonitory signs of the great depression.

With these facts in mind, we can now turn to study the growth

of the working-class movement during this capitalist " Golden Age." We shall find that its history falls into two periods—a time of consolidation and preparation in the 'fifties and early 'sixties, and a time of intensified industrial and political struggle in the late 'sixties and early 'seventies. These two periods will be the subjects of the two following chapters.

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Jenks. The Migration of British Capital.

CHAPTER II. THRIFT AND ABSTINENCE

1. Self-help in the Victorian Era
2. The Co-operative Movement
3. The Friendly Societies

I

Self-help in the Victorian Era

"Self-help" took rank among the principal virtues of the Victorian era. It was a duty, prescribed by moralists and economists, and fully recognised by artisans and tradesmen alike, to put by for a rainy day. An immense literature inculcated the virtue of thrift, and even estimated the chances of happiness in the next life by the test of frugality in this.

As we have seen, there were obvious reasons both for this insistence on thrift, and for the striking success of the appeals made to the middle and working classes to practise it. The Victorian era was the harvest-time for the material gains of the Industrial Revolution. The great social change, which transformed Great Britain from a largely agricultural to a predominantly manufacturing and commercial country, had brought with it new habits and ways of thought. Social relationships had been profoundly altered; a great new rich class had risen to economic power and political influence. And, with the great employers, merchants and bankers of the commercial era rose a host of lesser men. Small employers and factory managers, professional men and retail shopkeepers, multiplied fast. Social status came to depend more than ever on income; money became more than ever the key to respect, the hall-mark of an assured place in the social system. Money was not valued merely as a means to enjoyment; it had an even greater value as the means to social consideration and a sense of being at peace with both worlds.

These considerations naturally apply in greatest measure to the great middle class, which assumed in the Victorian era its characteristic form and internal stratification. But they apply also largely to the working class, or at least to a growing section of the working class. During the earlier stages of the Industrial Revolution the standard of living of the great majority of the workers was being beaten down. The agricultural labourer was reduced

to the extreme of penury; and most of the artisans belonging to the old-established crafts suffered some degradation through the introduction of new methods and the competition of less skilled labour operating the new machines. The handloom weaver was, of course, the extreme case; but many other crafts suffered in less degree. Great fortunes were made during the earlier stages of the Industrial Revolution; but the rewards went, not to the ordinary worker, but to the capitalists, great and small, who were building up the new system.

In the Victorian era we saw this situation was already changing. The social dislocation caused by enclosures and the emptying of the villages into the factory towns was ceasing; the new industrialism had developed enough to absorb the vast army of workers seeking employment. War was no longer draining away national resources in unproductive expenditure; and there was abundant wealth in the country to finance rapid industrial expansion. With the growth of companies and large partnerships, and the development of banking on a securer basis, the area of investment was being broadened out. Less pinching was needed than in the earlier days.

While, however, the acute pressure for more capital for industrial development was relaxed, and capitalists both became less " abstinent " and paid rather higher wages, they did not cease to preach the virtue of abstinence to their employees. The workers, moreover, after the miseries of the Industrial Revolution, saw at last a less desperate prospect ahead of them. By rigid saving, they could at last hope to put by a pittance for old age and as some security against unemployment; and, for those who possessed that " enterprise " which was the correlative virtue to thrift in the Victorian calendar, there was the possibility of rising out of the working class into the class of small employers or tradesmen. In comparison with the hopelessness of the preceding period, the Victorian workman, at least after 1848, saw before him a prospect which made it worth his while to save, and offered strong inducements to accept the capitalist system as a going concern, and try to make the best of it.

This tendency was, moreover, greatly stimulated by the policy of the now politically dominant capitalist class. The first great measure of the Reformed Parliament was the Poor Law Amend-

ment Act of 1834. This Act swept away the old system of poor relief, under which, over a large part of the country, the subsidising of wages out of the rates had become a regular practice, and a great part of the working class had come to look regularly to the Poor Law for relief. The new Act was based definitely on the view that it was a moral obligation upon the individual to maintain himself, and to provide against the contingencies of life by his own efforts. Its framers meant to attach a strong stigma to pauperism, and to make the conditions of relief unpleasant enough to be thoroughly deterrent to all who were not in the last extremity of destitution. They held, of course, that the enforcement of these principles would, under the favourable conditions of industrial expansion, cause such a rise in wages as to make self-maintenance possible, and that the great distress which the new Poor Law was bound to cause would be only temporary. They pushed through the change with an extraordinary callousness to this distress, and they pushed it much too far; but in the long run the result was in accordance with their expectations.

It is thus easy to see why the opening of the Victorian era coincided with a great growth of organisation designed to further "self-help" among the poorer classes. The standard of living was slowly rising for a considerable section of the people; and the abolition of the old Poor Law gave the maximum inducement to all who could by scraping put aside a small sum for sickness or old age to save lest they should fall into the clutches of the hated "Three Bashaws of Somerset House," or be incarcerated in the new "Bastilles." For these were the names by which the Poor Law Commissioners and the new Union Workhouses soon came to be popularly known.

We find, then, in the early days of the reign of Queen Victoria, a widespread movement among the working and certain sections of the middle class to create provident organisations of their own. On the one hand, we have the rapid increase of Friendly Societies of all types, Building Societies, and other purely provident bodies. And, on the other, we find the Co-operative Movement at length striking firm roots and, under the Rochdale system begun in 1844, becoming also a powerful stimulant to working-class saving, and a working-class equivalent to the capitalist limited company. We find, moreover, that the House of Commons, now dominated

by industrial and commercial interests, is eager to give a helping hand to working-class thrift, and therefore encourages these developments with a mass of protective legislation.

We can here deal with these various movements only in the barest outline. All of them have a history going back considerably beyond the Victorian era; but to all of them the Victorian era brought a great accession of adherents and influence. Let us deal first of all with the Co-operative Movement, in which the new attitude embodied its most significant contribution to working-class organisation.

II

The Co-operative Movement

The modern Co-operative Movement began when the Equitable Pioneers of Rochdale opened their Store in Toad Lane. Other Societies have disputed with them the first invention of the device of " dividend on purchases," round which the consumers' Co-operative Movement has been built. But the point does not greatly matter; for it is clear that Rochdale's success made the way plain for the growth of the movement. The device was essentially simple. Previous Societies had either tried to sell at cost price, thus facing a risk of loss and making it difficult to build up a capital fund; or they had sold at market price, and applied their profits to the building up of a " community " fund to be applied to the promotion of Owenite " Villages of Co-operation," or other communal services; or they had violated the Co-operative principle by paying dividends on invested capital in proportion to their trading success. In place of any of these methods, the Rochdale Pioneers sold at market price and returned their surplus to the members in proportion, not to their capital holdings in the Society, but to the cost of their purchases. At the same time, they encouraged their members to leave their dividends to accumulate as share-capital—a course which made possible the steady and progressive expansion of the business.

It is a moot point how far these early Co-operators were conscious of the magnitude of what they were doing. They began, like other early Co-operative groups, as a little body of working-class disciples of Robert Owen, and their first rules were phrased in orthodox Owenite language. The Rochdale Pioneers set out their aims in these terms:—

" The establishment of a store for the sale of provisions, clothing, etc.

The building, purchasing, or erecting a number of houses, in

which the members, desiring to assist each other in improving their domestic and social condition, may reside.

The manufacture of such articles as the Society may determine upon, to provide employment for such members who may be without employment, or who may be suffering in consequence of repeated reductions in their wages.

The purchasing, or renting of an estate or estates of land, which shall be cultivated by members who may be out of employment, or whose labour may be badly remunerated.

And further: That as soon as practicable this Society shall proceed to arrange the powers of production, distribution, education and government; or, in other words, to establish a self-supporting home colony of united interests, or assist other societies in establishing such colonies."

The language is here the purest Owenism, even to the reference to the " home colonies " which Owen was at this time energetically advocating through his latest propagandist organisation, the Home Colonisation Society. In the minds of the Pioneers, as of other early Co-operators, setting up shop was only a means to a much greater end, the self-employment of the members and ultimately the establishment of a complete and self-sufficient Owenite Community. Rochdale had been for some time a strong Owenite centre; a producers' Society for flannel-making had been set up there in the stirring times of 1830, and in 1838 the faithful had opened an Owenite " Social Hall." Not of set purpose did the Pioneers break completely away from the old Owenite tradition.

Their Store prospered; and within a few years the need for expansion faced them. Before long they embarked on production, and then, as other Societies began to grow up in neighbouring towns, opened a wholesale department. This latter failed for the time; but it deserves to be regarded as the forerunner of the Co-operative Wholesale Society. Meanwhile, the right methods of organising productive activity gave the Pioneers considerable trouble. Instead of founding productive departments under the control of the members, they created new societies, in which they invested capital and accepted investments from the general public. Inevitably, these societies tended to turn into ordinary joint stock capitalist concerns, and to lose their contact with the Co-operative

Movement. Gradually, productive departments attached to the consumers' Stores came to be preferred; but the great development of production under consumers' control did not come till much later, when the growth of Wholesale Co-operation made possible the establishment of factories directly owned and controlled by the associated Stores.

In the meantime, there was temporarily a great growth of Co-operation based on a different principle. In modern times, industrial Co-operation has taken two sharply contrasted forms. On the one hand, there is Consumers' Co-operation, in which the associated purchasers control the supply and production of the goods which they need, employing labour at a wage, with or without some form of profit-sharing arrangement. On the other hand there is producers' Co-operation, in which a body of associated producers, with or without the backing of their Trade Union, come together to form what is at least designed to be a self-governing workshop, under the control of the workers themselves.

There are sharp differences between these two forms of enterprise. The consumers' Store sells to its own members; the producers' Society must find a market outside its own membership. The consumers' Store, after the first humble start, gathers its capital from the loans and investments of its members, whereas the producers' Society can seldom acquire the means of production without loans of capital from outside. On the other hand, the consumers' Store as a rule merely employs labour at a wage, whereas the producers' Society at any rate aims at making the workers real partners in the enterprise.

In the pre-Rochdale days of Co-operation, as we saw in the previous volume of this study, these distinctions were not fully developed. The Store was regarded merely as a first step towards the self-employment of the members; the "Union Shop," or producers' Society, sought to link itself to an "Equitable Labour Exchange" which would enable it to put its trade on a mutual basis, instead of seeking custom in the open market. The distinction between the two types of Society was therefore neither sharp, nor clearly recognised. But the Rochdale method now sharply differentiated the consumers' Society, and, a few years later, the producers' type was no less clearly marked out.

This second differentiation was largely the work of the little group of men known as the Christian Socialists, headed by F. D. Maurice, Charles Kingsley, Edward Vansittart Neale, and J. M. Ludlow. These men, as readers of Kingsley's social novels know, had been deeply impressed by the misery of the workers in the "hungry forties," and by the failure of the Church to present any social gospel. The Kingdom of Christ, they proclaimed, must be of this world, as well as of the next—there was a Christian ideal of society, which it was incumbent upon Christians to strive to make real here on earth. Kingsley and his friends were deeply stirred by the atheism and rationalism which they found dominant among Chartists and Owenites, with whose social gospel they largely agreed. They set out to Christianise the Socialists and to socialise the Christians.

For a positive programme the Christian Socialists, with memories of the Owenite movement of 1830-1834 in their minds, turned to the France of 1848. The Charter, Kingsley wrote, "disappointed me bitterly when I read it. . . . The French cry of Organisation of Labour is worth a thousand of it." Under Ludlow's inspiration, the group took up the call of Buchez for Co-operative workshops and of Louis Blanc for the "organisation of labour." They began the founding of small co-operative workshops with the aid of capital mainly supplied by members of the group. They published journals and tracts in furtherance of their propaganda, and sent forth missionaries, of whom the old Owenite, Lloyd Jones, was the chief, to preach the gospel of association. Within a few years they had to accept the fact that they had failed. Their societies, too small, under-capitalised, and torn by internal dissensions, went down one after another. By 1854 the Christian Socialist Movement was at an end.

The Christian Socialists, however, while they failed in their direct objective, made more than one important contribution to the growth of the Co-operative principle. Apart from their attempts, through the Society for Promoting Working Men's Associations, which they founded in 1849, to create self-governing workshops, they took an active part in the wider activities of the Co-operative Movement, and were good friends to the Societies of the Rochdale type. In Owen's day, there had been regular Co-operative Conferences; but these had fallen into abeyance

after the collapse of 1834. The Christian Socialists were successful in stimulating a revival; and from the Rochdale Co-operative Conference of 1850 onwards more or less representative meetings were regularly held.

Above all did the Christian Socialists help the Co-operatives to secure the protection of the law. In the early days the lack of legal safeguards for the funds had been a serious difficulty. From 1836 onwards it was possible to secure a limited protection under the " Frugal Investment " clause of the Friendly Societies Act of that year. But, as Co-operation developed, it clearly needed a defined legal status of its own; and this the Christian Socialists set to work to help the Co-operators to secure. The Industrial and Provident Societies Acts of 1852, 1855 and 1862 at length gave the security that was needed, and endowed the Co-operative Movement with a legal position which has not greatly changed to-day.

Christian Socialism also exerted at least a passing influence on the Trade Unions. The persistence of Owenite ideas was shown when, in 1845, the National Association of United Trades for the Protection of Labour, the new central Trade Union body formed in the industrial revival of that time, created the National Association for the Employment of Labour, with the declared object of promoting Co-operative Societies of producers. The inclusion of a rule enabling the funds to be devoted to Co-operative production in the " new model " constitution of the Amalgamated Engineers in 1851 may be taken either as a survival of the old ideas, or as an instance of Christian Socialist influence. Probably it was in fact due to a mingling of both. But, though a number of Trade Unions adopted such rules, and a few founded actual societies, nothing much came of them. The lasting successes of Co-operation were achieved along " Rochdale " lines.

This, however, was by no means so clear to contemporaries as it now appears in retrospect. The early 'fifties were a season of experiment in all manner of associative enterprise—capitalist as well as working-class. The position of joint stock companies had been partly regularised in 1844, and there was a rush of flotations. As we have seen, even the Rochdale Pioneers, when they launched out into manufacture, experimented at first in various forms of joint stock organisation; and in Lancashire especially, the so-called

"Working Class Limiteds"—joint stock companies formed by working-class shareholders—developed in considerable numbers. But these either failed, like the self-governing workshops of the Christian Socialists, or in process of time lost their distinctive character, and evolved into ordinary joint stock concerns.

Meanwhile, the Owenite idea in the older form was far from dead. The Owenite Societies were still vigorously carrying on their propaganda, though this, in the hands of men like Holyoake, was becoming less and less a Socialist, and more and more a secularist agitation. The real successors of the earlier Owenites were rather those bodies of workmen who, between 1847 and 1851, founded and conducted the General Redemption Societies of Leeds, Norwich, Stockport, Bury, and other towns. These Societies aimed, by means of penny contributions, at building up a fund which could be applied to the "redemption of labour" through Co-operative organisation; and, though they either disappeared or developed in time into friendly societies of the ordinary type, they were responsible during their years of activity for setting a number of young Co-operative organisations on their feet. Especially in Yorkshire, the Co-operative Movement owes a good deal to these organisers of the transition from Owenism to consumers' associations of the modern type.

The late 'forties and early 'fifties were thus a season of extraordinary Co-operative growth. After the excitements of these years, the movement settled down to a less sensational course of development. The producers' societies were largely submerged or lost to Co-operation, the consumers' societies quietly grew, and expanded into new fields. The Industrial and Provident Societies Act of 1862, which for the first time gave full scope for federal development, made possible a further great advance, and the North of England Co-operative Wholesale Society was formed in the following year.

The history of the movement was already strewn with the wrecks of abortive wholesale organisations. Owen's Labour Exchanges of 1832, the North-West of England United Co-operative Company established a little later at Liverpool, the costly attempt of 1850, under Christian Socialist guidance, to create a Wholesale Society in London, the Wholesale Department set up by the Rochdale Pioneers in 1852, and subsequently

abandoned—all these showed the difficulties in the way. But the Act of 1862 made the task a great deal easier, and Abraham Greenwood, the leading spirit of the Rochdale Society, came forward with a plan for repeating on a larger scale the experiment which had proved so successful in the sphere of retail trade. The Societies in the North of England, through the Lancashire and Yorkshire Co-operative Conference Board, had already learned to work together. Why not create, for wholesale trade, a greater society of which they should all be members?

Thus the Rochdale plan was again followed in the creation of the Wholesale Society. Again goods were to be sold at their market prices; again dividends were to be paid in proportion to the amounts purchased; and again the recipients of dividend were to be encouraged to leave their money, at interest, in the Society's hands. But the members of the Wholesale were to be the retail Societies. To them dividends were to be paid; to them as shareholders the Wholesale was to belong. The plan worked. From small beginnings the North of England Wholesale Society grew rapidly. In 1868 the Scottish Co-operators followed the English example, and set up a Wholesale Society of their own. In 1873 the English Society founded its first productive works at Crumpsall and Leicester, and, dropping the prefix " North of England," became simply the C.W.S., and spread its influence over the entire country.

The great trading success of the new Co-operative Movement had, among other effects, that of cutting it off sharply from other forms of working-class organisation. Under Owen's inspiration, Co-operation, Trade Unionism and Socialism had been organised in close connection and for a common end. When Socialism shrunk up into secularism, Trade Unionism and Co-operation both went their own independent ways. For a time both lost touch with working-class politics, which were indeed almost completely submerged. But, whereas Trade Unionism was drawn back into politics in the 'sixties, to fight both for the extension of the franchise and for the amendment of the Labour laws, the Co-operative Movement, having won its legal status and security earlier and with far less difficulty, had no such strong inducement as the Trade Unions to embark on political action or propaganda. The ideas of Owen were still to some extent cherished, and " the Co-

operative Commonwealth " remained a phrase in the Co-operator's mouth. But the merely trading methods of the movement fitted in too well with the dominant Victorian philosophy of thrift and self-help not to sweep all before them. While Trade Unions were still frowned on and repressed, Co-operative Societies were encouraged and patted on the back. For success in their commercial enterprises they needed just that type of careful and honest artisan who most readily accepted the Victorian gospel. The Co-operators accomplished an immense task of organisation, and greatly increased both the self-respect and the economic strength of the working class. But the cost of their success was to a great extent the sacrifice of the earlier idealism, and an entire separation from the other sections of the movement. All that remained of Owenisn was a ritual of phrases and—what was perhaps worth more—a belief in education and a tradition of setting aside a percentage of profits for educational use.

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III

The Friendly Societies

Friendly Societies, of a sort, exist at all times among all civilised peoples. They existed in ancient Greece and Rome; they exist to-day in India and China. The Guilds of the Middle Ages were, in one aspect, friendly societies of a highly developed type. But in nineteenth-century Great Britain, and especially in the Victorian age, Friendly Societies took on a highly specialised form. Side by side with little village slate clubs, informal groupings for mutual credit or insurance, and similar primitive types of society, there grew up to power and influence great Friendly Societies, national in scale or extending over a large area, of which the great "Orders" represent the dominant type. The Oddfellows, the Foresters, the Druids, and several of the other great Orders originated well back in the eighteenth century, though most of them did not assume their present form until well on in the nineteenth. Defoe, in his famous *Essay on Projects*, urged the creation of Friendly Societies early in the eighteenth century, and a little later Huguenot refugees seem to have led the way in forming societies more stable and permanent than the small village clubs and trade friendly societies which were frequent from about 1740 onwards. No form of legal recognition was, however, given until 1793, when the "Rose" Act was passed. Thereafter, there was a steady stream of legislation. Important Acts extending further legal protection and regulating the working of the societies were passed in 1819, 1829, 1834, 1846, 1855, and 1875, when a great consolidating Act gave the law practically its present form.

It will be seen that the law began its encouragement to Friendly Societies considerably before the Victorian era. But, until Victorian times, the law was not wholly favourable. After the outbreak of the French Revolution, all forms of popular combination were for a long time regarded with jealous eyes, and from 1799 the Corresponding Societies Act made illegal the creation of

societies with branches, and thus placed the great Orders strictly beyond the pale of the law. This prohibition was not rigidly enforced; but it operated against the growth of the movement on a national scale. Moreover from 1799 to 1824 the Combination Acts were in force, and all forms of Trade Unionism were forbidden by law. Naturally, many Trade Unions sought to evade the prohibition by disguising themselves as Friendly Societies; or perhaps it would be truer to say that many bodies, which were really both Trade Unions and Friendly Societies, sought to cover up the one activity by the other, and thus at the same time to evade prosecution and secure legal protection.

The Corresponding Societies Act was still in force at the beginning of the Victorian era; but it had ceased to be commonly enforced, and, in particular, bodies such as the Oddfellows and Foresters, in which there was a large " petty *bourgeois* " element, were practically exempt from its operation. The Manchester Unity of Oddfellows, which led the way towards the reorganisation of the Orders on modern lines, was started in 1812, and round about the beginning of the Victorian period most of the great Orders began to assume something like their modern form. The Ancient Order of Foresters was reorganised in 1834, and in the same year the Oddfellows underwent a similar process.

Thereafter, growth was rapid, and the Orders tended to embrace a wider section of the people, as the more skilled workers rose above the bare subsistence level. Nor was growth confined to the Orders with their affiliated courts or branches. Every type of Friendly Society multiplied fast, and new types came into existence in order to meet changing needs. The Royal Commission of 1870-1874, on whose Report the Act of 1875 was based, divided Friendly Societies into thirteen distinct types, of which we can here mention only a few of the most important.

The essence of the modern Friendly Society is that it enables the members, by a method of mutual insurance, to provide for themselves certain benefits in case of sickness, death, or other contingencies. Sick and burial benefits are in practice by far the most important services provided. Clearly the method of insurance cannot advance beyond a primitive stage without the aid of the skilled actuary working on data which enable the proper ratio of benefits to contributions to be calculated with some

approach to accuracy. In the eighteenth century, Dr. Price by his vital tables did a great deal to establish actuarial calculation on a firm basis, though his own tables had to be greatly revised in the light of later experience. For estimating the risk of deaths the societies of the early nineteenth century were in possession of useful data; but they had to wait long before sickness benefit could be put on a satisfactory basis. The Tables issued in 1850 by Henry Ratcliffe, Corresponding Secretary of the Oddfellows, were a great step forward, and a little later the State took up the matter, and, compelling the Societies to make returns, accumulated a vast mass of data which at length put the science on a firm foundation. Until this was done, it was inevitable that many societies should work on an unsound financial basis. The State, in regulating Friendly Societies, wavered for some time between its desire to minimise interference and its feeling that, in the interest of the members, unsound finance ought to be suppressed. In 1829 John Tidd Pratt was appointed to examine and certify the rules of all societies desiring registration, and thereafter it was often erroneously supposed that his certificate was a guarantee of financial soundness. But gradually the State gave up the attempt to ensure solvency by compulsion, and resorted instead to the method of enforced publicity and periodical valuation of assets.

Meanwhile, in 1846, the Registry of Friendly Societies was formally constituted, and Tidd Pratt became the first Chief Registrar, many types of society, including Co-operative Societies, Building Societies, and Trade Unions, passing gradually under the supervision of his department. In 1876 he was succeeded by J. M. Ludlow, who had been active in the Christian Socialist Movement, and for the first time gave strong State help and encouragement to Co-operative Societies and to the great Friendly Society Orders. Tidd Pratt, while he was a keen advocate of Friendly Societies, had been an opponent of the great Orders, and had encouraged rather societies of a localised type.

The Royal Commission of 1870, as we have seen, distinguished many distinct types of society. Besides the great Orders, with their affiliated branches and mainly localised finance, the Commission found in existence many purely local societies in both town and country, a considerable number of County Societies,

mostly run under patronage rather for the members than by them, dividing societies, deposit societies, collecting societies, and many others.

These various bodies differed greatly in character, though all of them in one form or another provided friendly benefits in return for contributions from their members. In the Orders and in some of the local societies, the element of mutual insurance was combined with a strong element of social activity, so that they existed almost as much for purposes of good fellowship as for the provision of funeral benefits. At the other extreme, some of the centralised Societies, and particularly the collecting societies specialising in burial benefits and collecting their contributions by house to house visitation, were and are barely distinguishable from Insurance Companies of the " industrial " type, save in having no body of shareholders, and in being run rather for the benefit of their collectors and directors than of a body of investors. These societies had no social activity, and only the most perfunctory forms of control by their members. On the other hand, the collecting societies, like certain Insurance Companies, succeeded in reaching a much poorer section of the people than was touched by such Orders as the Oddfellows or the Foresters, but did this at the cost of spending on administration a very large proportion of the sums contributed by their members.

The Collecting Societies and certain of the other centralised Societies never really had any democratic character. They met a need, and they throve; but, unlike the Orders and some of the local Societies, they were not created and administered by the members on a really mutual basis.

In some of the other types of Friendly Society are found methods intermediate between the true method of mutual insurance and the pure individualism of the Savings Bank. Such were the deposit societies in which only a part of the contributions was pooled to make a common fund, the rest accumulating as a deposit to the credit of the individual contributor, and the right to a share in the benefits drawn from the common fund depending on the possession of an individual balance. Other societies were of the " dividing " type—that is, they were in operation only for a limited period, at the end of which the members, after paying benefits on the mutual basis, divided out the balance, and then

started afresh. This method obviously made it impossible to accumulate funds in order to deal with major contingencies.

In short, there were by 1870 societies of very many different types and sorts, assuring most various benefits, and ranging from local slate clubs to great national bodies, and from societies based on good fellowship and social activity to purely business concerns. But all these various types of society fulfilled, though in many cases they fulfilled most imperfectly, real needs, the nature of which, as well as the reason for their emergence at this time, I have tried already to explain.

Moreover, side by side with Friendly Societies, there grew up many types of organisation serving largely similar purposes. Savings Banks were suggested by Defoe in 1697, and founded in various parts of Germany and Switzerland during the eighteenth century. Bentham again proposed their adoption in 1797, and two years later the first Savings Bank in Great Britain was started at Wendover. In 1807 Whitbread proposed that the Post Office should establish a Savings Bank; but this was not done until 1861. Meanwhile, voluntary Savings Banks multiplied fast. In 1817 the first regulating Act was passed, and this was supplemented by many amending measures. The State encouraged the formation of banks by allowing an exceptionally favourable rate of interest on their funds deposited with the Commissioners for the National Debt.

Another important thrift organisation of the Victorian era was the Building Society, which, it is hardly necessary to point out, is wrongly named, since it in the main exists, not to build houses, but to advance to its members part of the purchase price of houses built by someone else. Building Societies began to be formed towards the end of the eighteenth century, but did not come under special legal regulation until 1836. At first, they were temporary bodies, lasting only until each of the individual members had received and repaid the advance he needed. But, from 1846 onwards, the present type of Permanent Building Society began to develop, and at the same time a differentiation began to grow up between investors and borrowers, who had been originally the same people. Thus, the Building Society, like the Co-operative Store, became an important field for the investment of small savings, and a working- and lower middle-class equivalent to the limited company.

The Building Society, even if its government is to some extent democratic in form, is purely a business concern, usually with no social side. But for a long time its business reputation was very bad. There were many defalcations, and a great many of the societies were for a long time financially unsound. The great "Liberator" crash of 1893 was only the culminating point in a long series of disasters. This at length caused drastic reorganisation. Many Societies were wound up, and the survivors were put on firmer foundations. But, before this, despite the risky finance of many of them, very large sums were invested in a type of body which met an obvious social need.

Of an essentially different type, serving not a financial but a social interest, were the Working Men's Clubs, which sprang up in great numbers from about 1860 onwards. The Club movement owes its inception to a benevolent clergyman, the Rev. Henry Solly, whom we shall meet again as joint editor for a time of the *Beehive*, the most influential working-class newspaper of the 'sixties and 'seventies. Originally intended as temperance rivals to the public-house, the Clubs were gradually brought, by the democratic will of their membership, to supply drink as well as other amenities to the workman. The Working Men's Club and Institute Union, formed in 1862, grew slowly for the first twelve years of its life. In 1873 it was put on a democratic basis, and from 1875, having adopted its modern form, it grew rapidly. The Clubs included some attached to particular political parties; but the movement as a whole had, and has, no declared political colour. It is purely social, with a slight admixture of educational activity.

More than any of these organisations, however, the great Co-operative movement described in the last chapter made itself felt as a field of investment for working-class savings. This statement, indeed, applied mainly to the distributive societies, in whose case the conditions were far most favourable for the investor. The producers' societies, as we have seen, have at all times to sell their products partly in the open market, and have there to compete directly with capitalist producers, while their members expect better conditions because they are part of a democratic movement. This might not be an insuperable obstacle if the producers' societies were in a position to compete on equal terms. Usually, however, they are not; for they have by no means the same

opportunities for raising capital as the consumers' societies. The working-class investor generally looks for security rather than a high rate of interest. The consumers' societies, when once they had established their position, were able to offer excellent security to the investor; but productive industry on a competitive basis necessarily involves far more risk. The workman with money saved preferred to entrust it to the Co-operative Societies of consumers, and the " dividend " also provided these Societies with a means by which capital accumulated easily; for often the member was ready to let part of his dividend accumulate as capital instead of drawing it out to meet current expenditure. Thus the consumers' movement soon outstripped that of the producers, and Victorian Co-operation took shape rather as a mutual thrift organisation than as a direct challenge to the capitalist system of wage-labour.

All the movements and organisations which we have been considering in this chapter—Friendly Societies, Savings Banks, Building Societies, Co-operative Stores—together make up a most powerful apparatus for the promotion of thrift and mutual service on a basis of thrift. No one of them has been exclusively a working-class movement, and none, save the least satisfactory forms of Friendly Society, the slate club and the collecting society, managed to reach to any great extent the lowest strata of the working class. The more democratically run Friendly Societies were very largely dominated by what Continental writers call the " petty *bourgeoisie* "; the Co-operative Movement, on the other hand, while it always included many middle-class persons, still, largely because of the inevitable antagonism between it and the trading interest, remained throughout under predominantly working-class control. The larger Friendly Societies other than the great " Orders," the Building Societies and the Savings Banks, either were throughout, or speedily became, purely business concerns, having with their members only a cash nexus, and arousing no feelings of loyalty beyond the actual services which they performed. Of all the movements described, the Co-operative Movement alone had in itself the social force that could make it a powerful instrument of economic transformation.

To discuss this wider aspect of Co-operation is, however, beyond the scope of this study. We are here concerned with all these

movements as they manifested themselves during the Victorian era, at a time when society was settling down after the convulsions of the Industrial Revolution to make the best of capitalism and to realise its full potentialities. I have tried to show how, during this time, there were powerful social forces influencing the workers to adopt habits of thrift and insurance, and so impelling them to devise both methods of mutual provision against the risks of life and safe places for the investment of their savings. Though Co-operation never lost altogether the idealistic and anti-capitalistic character derived from its early struggles under the influence of Owen, we have seen that during the Victorian era this aspect of it was thrust into the background, and it developed rather as a mutual type of business organisation adopting many of the features of capitalism than as a direct and menacing rival to capitalist enterprise. In the same way, the Friendly Societies, without discarding their older character as associations of good fellowship, developed more and more into mutual benefit societies in which this element, once primary, fell to the second place.

Everything thus tended to impress on working-class organisation in the Victorian era the mood and character dominant in Victorianism itself—a mood of acquisitiveness, which measured men by money and reckoned virtues largely in monetary terms. It is of course obvious that in the long run this mood contributed greatly to the accumulation of capital and to the increase of riches and the raising of the standard of life. That it also raised up serious problems to which capitalism has furnished no solution became obvious only at a later stage. As long as fresh markets could easily be found abroad for the goods which a saving people were able to produce in ever-increasing abundance, the process of putting by riches to make more riches passed with most men unchallenged, though a few, Karl Marx among them, prophesied a Nemesis to come, when the problem of society would be, not to produce enough, but to devise means of consuming that which it had all the material means of getting produced.

This, however, is looking beyond our period. In the Victorian era, we find a large body of the workers, especially in the more skilled grades and more highly organised industries, gradually raising themselves above the starvation level of the preceding period, and acquiring, to a small extent, a " stake in the country."

The scope and policy of Victorian Trade Unionism, which is dealt with in the next chapter, illustrate the working of the same forces. The position may be summed up by saying that, in the Victorian era, the possibility of realising a small surplus over the necessary minimum of current expenditure presented itself to a large body of workers, and was at once the cause of a great expansion of mutual activity. Instead of spending his small surplus, the Victorian workman applied it, first to meeting the contingencies of life, in which the State, under the influence of *laissez-faire* doctrines, refused him its help, and secondly in saving up for old age or a rainy day by buying his own house through a Building Society, or investing in a Building Society or a Co-operative Store. The Victorian workman learned readily the lesson which his masters were fain to teach him. He was as thrifty as they could desire; and in many respects his thrift both made him more tolerant than his fathers of the system under which he lived, and led him to assimilate to it his ways of action and thought. The "Lib-Lab" policy of the Victorian working-class leaders is readily understood when it is related to the economic basis of Victorian society.

BOOKS

Brabrook. Provident Societies.
Baernreither. English Associations of Working Men.
Frome Wilkinson. Mutual Thrift.
Frome Wilkinson. The Friendly Society Movement.

CHAPTER III. TRADE UNIONISM RE-MADE

1. Trade Unionism, 1835-1850
2. The New Models—The Engineers and the Cotton Operatives
3. The Builders
4. The Miners

I

Trade Unionism, 1835-1850

The new method of the Rochdale Pioneers brought about, within a few years, a complete change in the organisation and policy of the Co-operative Movement. No change equally startling or general took place among the Trade Unions, which had to meet a far stiffer opposition from the employing class, and to deal with a far less uniform set of conditions. The problems of Co-operative store-keeping were much the same everywhere; but what suited the textile operatives as a method of Trade Union organisation would not necessarily suit the builders, nor would what suited the miners be likely to suit the engineers. Trade Unionism everywhere underwent great changes corresponding to the new economic and social conditions; but the new Unions assumed many different forms, and followed to a large extent different policies.

This fact is apt to be overlooked if attention is unduly concentrated on Unions of one particular type. Thus, the formation in 1851 of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers is generally acclaimed as the introduction of a " new model " in Trade Union organisation, so as almost to imply that it provided a pattern to which all Unions gradually sought to conform. There is an element of truth in this view, and it is certainly true that the new " Amalgamated Societies " were by far the most characteristic Trade Union products of the Victorian age; but the new organisations of the miners and cotton operatives are of no less interest, and represent, in some degree, a different attitude and policy based on their different economic circumstances. In this chapter, an attempt will be made to describe these various types of " new Unionism " in both their resemblances and their contrasts.

In the previous volume of this study, the growth of Trade Unionism was fully dealt with up to the great collapse of 1834, when the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union broke up

under the combined onslaughts of the employers and the Government. Thereafter, only casual mention was made of the subsequent development, as it arose in connection with the Chartist and the later Owenite agitations. It is now, therefore, necessary briefly to pick up the threads, and to describe the fortunes of the Unions from 1834 to their lasting recovery in the eighteen-fifties.

When the great Trades Union broke up, the groups which had composed it did not disappear. It had been formed largely on the basis of previously existing local Trade Clubs, and even embryonic national trade societies. When it was dissolved, many of its units, and most of the new members who had flocked in during the period of excitement, doubtless disappeared; but many local and some national societies held together. And the same thing happened in the collapse of the other big Unions of 1834—the Spinners, the Potters, the Clothiers and the Builders.

Thus, there remained in being quite a number of national societies. The Stonemasons and the Carpenters among the building trades lived on, and the former continued as the most stable and powerful Trade Union in the country down to the formation of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. In the metal trades, which had played little part in the upheavals of 1830-1834, several at least nominally national societies survived. The Steam Engine Makers of Liverpool, the Journeymen Steam Engine Makers of Manchester, the Yorkshire Mechanics, the Old Smiths, and the Friendly Society of Ironfounders all traced their history well back beyond the late troubles, and all survived until the amalgamation of 1851. The Lancashire cotton operatives, the miners on the North-East Coast and in other areas, preserved at least a skeleton organisation. The Potters' Union almost lapsed, but was revived in 1843. The Boilermakers, who had formed their first national society in 1834, managed to maintain it in continuous existence.

By 1841, there were clear signs of a Trade Union revival. Under the leadership of Martin Jude and the North-East Coast, the miners formed the Miners' Association of Great Britain, and began to hold national delegate conferences and to send out organisers to visit every colliery in the country. In the following year broke out in the Northern Counties and in Wales the great strikes of which, for the time, the Chartists assumed the leadership.

But trade was bad, and the movement was not strong enough to stand up against the combined force of unemployment and Government repression. The strikers were beaten, and had to return to work on the employers' terms. In 1843 the South Wales Miners suffered a similar defeat, and the collapse of their Union was followed, as in 1834, by an organised terrorist movement known as the "Scotch Cattle." In 1844 the West Yorkshire Miners and the Durham Miners were both engaged in unsuccessful strikes which reduced their Unions to impotence. In 1847 Martin Jude's great National Union broke up under the strain, and an attempt in 1850 to re-form it on a national basis was unsuccessful. But large sections of it survived; both on the North-East Coast and in Lancashire the Unions held together.

To this period of the miners' history belongs their first adoption of a method of Trade Union action which they have ever since largely used. More than any other body of workers, the miners were faced with continuous legal repression. Their troubles arose largely out of the system of long-term hirings, which bound them to one employer without giving them any guarantee of employment. Jude's Union engaged W. P. Roberts, the well-known Chartist lawyer, at a salary of £1,000 a year, to fight every possible case of repression in the courts. He was extraordinarily successful, and earned himself the name of the "miners' attorney-general." Even after the collapse of the Miners' Union, he was frequently retained for many years later in all manner of Trade Union cases.

While the miners were thus active, the engineering workers, hitherto of little note in the Trade Union world, were rapidly rising to prominence. As early as 1836 the London engineering societies had jointly conducted a successful strike for the ten hours' day; but it was in Lancashire in the early 'forties that the real forward movement began. In 1844 a joint strike in Lancashire against the employers' attempt to impose a "quittance paper," or leaving certificate, system led to a movement for the better organisation of the trades affected. In the same year the London engineers were again successful, by means of a joint movement, in enforcing a reduction in hours. In 1847 the movement for closer unity was officially taken up by the Journeymen Steam Engine Makers' Society, by far the largest and most important in the industry. William Newton, in London, and in Lancashire

William Allan, who became General Secretary in 1848, vigorously pressed the movement, and in 1850 they were successful in getting a number of the leading societies to join forces. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers was formally instituted at the beginning of 1851, and after a few months of hesitation, members and small local societies began to flock in to the new body. Only a few societies, of which the Steam Engine Makers' Society of Liverpool was the most important, refused to come in. The Boilermakers and Ironfounders, however, also remained separate, and became the nuclei of large independent societies in other branches of the industry.

The special position and influence of the A.S.E. are described in the following section. Apart from the engineers, other trades were moving in the direction of closer unity. A National Typographical Association, formed in 1845 by the linking up of a number of local societies, broke down two years later in face of internal dissensions. But in 1849 the leading societies outside London drew together again in the loosely knit Provincial Typographical Association, and in London the Society of Compositors assumed something like its present form.

The building trades, without doing much to improve their organisation, were active in forward movements. In 1846 they conducted in Lancashire an unsuccessful strike for the nine hours' day, and in 1848 and the following years there were in London and elsewhere a number of small strikes, in most cases successful, for the recognition of the Saturday half-holiday. Richard Harnott, perhaps the most typical and influential Trade Union leader of the time, became General Secretary of the Stonemasons' Society in 1847, and under his guidance the Society gained greatly in power and prestige.

The reawakening of Trade Union activity is still more clearly shown by the attempt, in 1845, to bring together all the Trade Unions into a single body for common action and mutual defence. On the initiative of the Organised Trades of Sheffield, whose leader was John Drury, a conference of Unions in that year formed the National Association of United Trades for the Protection of Labour, with a name and constitution recalling John Doherty's similar Association of 1830, upon which it was clearly modelled. The continuity with the older ideas was further shown by the

revival of the idea of Co-operative production under Trade Union control, and an auxiliary body, the National Association of United Trades for the Employment of Labour, was formed to raise funds for the starting of Co-operative workshops. Thomas Slingsby Duncombe, a well-known Radical M.P. sympathetic to Chartism, became President of both bodies, and an energetic propaganda was set on foot.

The event, however, showed that, while the Trade Union revival was real enough, the spirit of the Unions was changing. Relatively few of the larger Unions agreed to join, and the bad trade of 1845 and 1846 caused many strikes and lock-outs, which depleted the Association's funds. Before long the attempt to found Co-operative workshops was virtually given up, and the Association for the Employment of Labour merged in the larger body. But this too declined in power and influence, and underwent a change of policy. Its most important achievement was effected in 1859, when it secured the passage of a short Act legalising peaceful picketing. Thereafter, it accomplished little. Lingering on until 1867, it was known in its later years only as a promoter of conciliation and an advocate of legislative measures to promote industrial harmony. On the passing of the abortive Conciliation Act of 1867 it was formally wound up.

In its early years, apart from the strain of strikes, the National Association had to stand the hammerings of the law. In 1847, on the unsupported accusation of two convicts, John Drury and three other leaders of Sheffield Trade Unionism were accused of incitement to destroy machinery. They were sentenced to ten years' transportation, and, when the monstrous sentence was quashed on a technical point, a new charge was at once brought forward. The National Association took up the case, and finally, after a year's delay, the prisoners were released. This legal prosecution was one of the factors in hastening the decline of the Association.

The National Association of United Trades stands just at the point of transition between the older Unionism and the new. In one aspect, and probably in the intention of its founders, it was a late attempt to organise a " General Union " on Owenite lines and with a Co-operative or Socialist object. But in another aspect, and in the actual working out, it became an embodiment of the

new idea of making the best of Capitalism and living at peace with the employer. It was not a very successful embodiment of this idea, because neither were most employers ready at this time to be conciliatory, nor most Unions conscious of the need for any central organisation at all. Each Union was busy building up its own strength, and pursuing its own limited objects. "Past experience," wrote the Manchester Stonemasons, "has taught us that we have had general union enough."

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II

The New Models—The Engineers and the Cotton Operatives

The Amalgamated Society of Engineers is commonly acclaimed as a " New Model " in Trade Union organisation. The " model " was indeed really that of its predecessor, the Journeymen Steam Engine Makers' Society (formed in 1826), whose constitution and methods of organisation it adopted with relatively little change. But the amalgamation and the struggle which followed it made the A.S.E. the leading Union in the country, and attracted to it both observers and imitators. It became the model for a whole series of " Amalgamated " Societies formed during the next twenty years.

The essential basis of the " new model " was a close combination of trade and friendly activities. The A.S.E. provided for all its members a wide range of benefits, ranging from dispute and unemployment benefit to sickness and superannuation benefit. In order to pay these, it had to exact a high rate of contribution; and the shilling a week which its members had to pay closed it to all but the thriftier and better-paid artisans. It was, and was meant to be, a society of skilled men, bound together by close ties of common craftsmanship, and looking to it not only for trade protection, but equally for mutual insurance. In short, it was a Trade Union and a Friendly Society almost in equal measure.

It was necessary for a body of this sort to adopt a more elaborate and secure financial organisation than mere trade societies had usually possessed. Centralisation of funds was out of the question, since the law provided no adequate safeguards for them; but the system of leaving the funds with the branches while providing for periodical equalisation according to branch membership, combined with the enactment of an elaborate code of rules stating precisely on what terms benefits might be paid, secured the result of central control even without gathering the funds together. In trade matters the control was even tighter; for no strike benefit could

be paid out save by direct order of the central executive. The administration of benefits under the rules was left in the hands of the branches; but for industrial purposes the branches were grouped into District Committees, which possessed independent negotiating powers up to, but just short of, the actual calling of a strike.

Allan and Newton were the two outstanding men in the new Union. Allan, who became General Secretary on the amalgamation, was a cautious Scotsman, and a very competent financial administrator. Newton was of a somewhat different type. He had been a foreman in London, till he was dismissed for his Trade Union activities. He then, in 1848, took a public-house at Ratcliff, which became a great working-class centre. He brought London into the amalgamation, and in 1852 stood as Chartist candidate for Parliament at Tower Hamlets. A close friend of Allan's, he seems to have been more disposed to push for an advanced industrial policy. He was, however, never a full-time official of the Society; and it was Allan's caution that rather impressed itself on the character of the internal administration, and ultimately on the policy that was adopted.

At the outset, the A.S.E. appeared as a militant industrial body. An essential part of the policy embodied in the amalgamation was an attempt to secure an increased control over the conditions of work. Already in 1845 the Journeymen Steam Engine Makers' Society had declared war on the working of systematic overtime, on the employment of labourers on machines, and on "the piece-master system" and piece-work generally. The hope of putting up a more effective struggle against these abuses was one of the main motives behind the amalgamation, and, as soon as the new society was formed, the more active branches began to put forward their claims. The employers at once replied to the threat of the amalgamation by forming a great new organisation of their own to fight it; and already in 1851 the two national bodies—the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and the Central Association of Employers of Operative Engineers—were facing each other menacingly.

At this stage the A.S.E. balloted its members on a proposal for the abolition of piece-work and systematic overtime, and secured a huge majority in favour of immediate action. The employers

retaliated by announcing that they would meet a strike, even in one establishment, with an immediate general lock-out of all members of the Society. The Union offered arbitration, which was refused. Thereupon the engineers refused to work overtime, and, in January, 1852, the general lock-out was declared. It extended to London and Lancashire, in which the main strength of both the rival organisations lay.

For three months the struggle lasted. The engineers received considerable financial help from other Unions and from the general public; but in the end they were forced back to work. The employers at first made plans for the formation of a rival " Trade Union " directly under their own control, and to the end refused to take the men back unless they signed a " document " renouncing membership of the Union. The men, quite rightly, took the view that such a document, signed under duress, could not be binding. They signed, and retained their Union membership. Within a brief space of time, the Society was both numerically and financially stronger than before the struggle.

The engineering struggle created a great public impression. The Christian Socialists, then at the height of their activity, lent the Union powerful support, and joined with Frederic Harrison and the Positivists, later to be staunch allies of the " new " Unionism, in giving publicity to the workers' case. At a single stride, the Engineers had leapt to the foremost place in the Trade Union Movement.

Almost at the same time, the cotton operatives were organising their forces afresh. In 1852 and 1853 the Spinners' Union was remodelled, and the first of the modern standard piece-work " price lists " in the industry was adopted. The Blackburn lists of 1853 represent an important stage in the growth of that system of collective bargaining which has ever since dominated the cotton trades. In the same year, however, the cotton workers suffered, in the long-drawn Preston spinners' strike, a notable though not a lasting reverse. The Preston spinners at certain factories struck for an advance in wages, and the employers retaliated with a general lock-out. The movement spread to other towns, where in most cases the workers were successful. But in Preston the employers, aided by contributions from the manufacturers throughout Lancashire, stood firm. Blacklegs were imported, and

the strike leaders arrested. At length the men were driven back to work, and the leaders were then released without trial. Yet again the law had intervened to help in the breaking of a strike.

The defeat, however, did not check the development of organisation. During the next few years Unionism rapidly increased, and in 1858 the weavers followed the spinners' example, and formed the North Lancashire Weavers' Amalgamation, the nucleus round which the modern Amalgamated Weavers' Association has grown. This was followed, in 1859, by another serious strike. The Padiham weavers struck in order to secure a standard price list. Again the workers were defeated ; but again defeat failed to check the development of the Unions.

These textile Trade Unions were of a distinctly different type, and followed a distinctly different policy, from such bodies as the Amalgamated Society of Engineers. In structure they were, and have remained to this day, federal. The local associations of each craft, instead of becoming mere branches of a national body, retained their separate existence and funds, only uniting in a central " amalgamation " for industrial purposes. No such uniformity of contributions and benefits as among the engineers was therefore required ; and on local matters and as friendly societies the local associations retained their autonomy. At first, wages were separately negotiated for each town; but gradually uniform price-lists extending over a wider area were developed, and the practice grew of adjusting wages by making uniform percentage additions or deductions to or from the list prices. Wage negotiations were thus greatly simplified, and, as bargaining on wage issues became centralised, the power of the " amalgamations " grew. While the engineers had a centralised constitution, but local bargaining, the cotton operatives had a localised constitution, but tended more and more to central bargaining.

In a still more important respect, the policy of the cotton operatives differed widely from that of the engineers. As we have seen, the policy of the A.S.E. was directed mainly to the restriction and regulation of the supply of labour. By limiting overtime and apprenticeship, by the possession of an emigration fund (about this time a very frequent, though ineffective, Trade Union device for restricting the supply of labour), and by insisting that only apprenticed men should be employed on machines, the

engineers sought to keep up the value of their skill. To the cotton operatives, no such policy suggested itself as possible. No corresponding apprenticeship was needed, or could have been enforced. Again, whereas the engineers were mainly time-workers, engaged in a ceaseless struggle against the piece-work system, the cotton operatives were practically all piece-workers, and the piece-work system of payment was far too strongly entrenched for them even to think of altering it.

Under these conditions, the cotton workers were above all concerned to set limits to the length of the working day, and to improve working conditions in the factories. They would use their own organisation to look after wages, provided these things were adequately safeguarded. But the obvious method of reducing hours and improving conditions was by legislation. From the very beginning of the century the cotton operatives had been continuously agitating for a proper code of factory legislation. They had backed Owen's efforts in 1816; their Short-Time Committees, under Doherty's leadership, had taken a great part in the agitation which led up to the Factory Act of 1833; and the same methods had been used again in connection with Peel's Act of 1844, the Ten Hours Act of 1847, and the Sixty Hours Act of 1850.

The engineers, typical in this respect of a much larger body of skilled craftsmen in many trades, relied almost wholly on their own strength, based on the limited supply of labour, and took little interest in industrial legislation, to which indeed many of their leaders were opposed on *laissez-faire* principles. But the cotton operatives, and the textile workers generally, looked to the law for protection, and were thus led directly into a succession of mainly political agitations.

The outstanding Trade Union developments of the eighteen-fifties were the rise of these two types of organisation. On the one hand there arose the " Amalgamated Society " of the type represented by the A.S.E., with its close combination of industrial and friendly activities, its centralisation of control, and its non-political policy of restrictive regulation of the supply and conditions of labour. On the other, there grew up the " Amalgamation " of the type represented by the Spinners' and Weavers' Associations, with its localised finance and its federal structure, its collective bargaining based on standard price lists, and above all its steady

pressure for legislative regulation of the hours and conditions of work. These two types were not opposed; but they tended to look at the industrial problem in different ways, and to concentrate their attention on different aspects. And for this reason they tended to work apart, and felt little need for common action. We shall see later how the development among the miners of a third type of organisation affected this attitude, and acted as a unifying force.

BOOKS

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III

The Builders

One effect of the great growth of prosperity in Victorian England was a great increase in the scale and importance of the building trades. In the 'fifties and 'sixties, houses, factories, railway stations, public buildings and institutions were all being erected in large numbers. More workers were needed; and skilled building labour became relatively scarce. It is therefore not surprising to find the building Trade Unions occupying an important place in the Trade Union Movement and displaying considerable industrial activity.

Till the rise of the Engineers, the Stonemasons' Society was, as we have seen, the most powerful single Union in the country. Its central funds were never large, and its branches enjoyed a far greater autonomy than those of the new "Amalgamated Societies." It was, indeed, a Union of the old type, designed as a fighting organisation and not as a friendly society, and preserving the old tradition of local independence. The other building crafts were far less well organised. The Friendly Society of Carpenters and Joiners, the other national organisation which had survived the crash of 1834, was small and ineffective, and the majority of these crafts were organised, if at all, in purely local trade clubs at best loosely knit by purely local joint committees. The London Order of Bricklayers was formed in 1848, and the Manchester Painters' Alliance in 1855; but, though these became the nuclei of national organisations later, they were purely local bodies at least until 1860. The plumbers and probably the carpenters had joined the National Association of United Trades in 1845, and under its auspices an attempt had been made to organise the builders' labourers as in the days of the Owenite movement. But this was abortive, and in the 'fifties the builders were organised mainly in loosely-knit local joint movements based on tiny independent local clubs and on the branches of the few national Unions.

This did not prevent them from displaying great industrial

activity. The Stonemasons, under Harnott's leadership, vigorously kept up both wages and the monopoly of their craft. And, from the 'forties onwards, all the building trades were actively engaged in an attempt to reduce the hours of labour and to secure the general adoption of the Saturday half-holiday. The Lancashire joint movement of 1846 and the London joint movement of 1848 have been mentioned already.

In the 'fifties a new wave of activity began. In 1853 the London masons inaugurated a shorter hours movement. In 1856 a big strike of all the Manchester building trades won the Saturday half-holiday. In the following year the London carpenters, through their joint committee representing the numerous local clubs, demanded the concession of the nine hours' day, which the employers promptly refused. In both London and Lancashire, moreover, the master builders organised to resist the men's demands, and formed strong associations of their own. The London men retaliated by putting their movement on a broader basis, and in 1858 formed a Joint Committee of Carpenters, Masons and Bricklayers to press their claims. This Committee decided to petition four selected firms in the first instance. One of these firms, Messrs. Trollope, dismissed the leading men who had presented the petition, and their employees thereupon struck. The masters met the strike with a general lock-out, and refused to negotiate with the Unions on any terms. Instead, they presented the " document," and announced that they would not take back any man who would not sign a complete renunciation of Trade Union membership. This was in 1859.

The London building lock-out attracted attention and support from all over the country. In 1852 the " document " had been presented to the engineers, and the issue had been generally recognised as vital to the whole Trade Union Movement. Now the building workers were exposed to the same threat, and once more the movement rallied to the support of the section which was attacked. The engineers, doubtless mindful of the support they had received seven years before, sent three weekly gifts of £1,000 each to the strike fund. Everywhere the Unions organised collections, and formed special joint committees to help the builders. In London a standing Committee of the Unions in other industries was formed to organise the assistance.

The London builders had, moreover, the advantage of an exceptionally popular leader. George Potter, a member of a small local carpenters' society, was the head of the strike organisation. And Potter could both speak and write, and knew how to arouse passionate loyalty. In face of the spirit of the men, and the support accorded to them, the master builders failed to repeat the success which the engineering employers had secured in 1852. For months the struggle continued; but at length the masters were compelled to withdraw the "document." The men, however, were not strong enough to enforce their own claims, and work was resumed on the old conditions. The demand for the nine hours' day had, indeed, actually been withdrawn some time before the struggle ended, in order that the Unions might concentrate wholly on defeating the masters' challenge to their right to exist and negotiate. As in 1834, there was an attempt, during the lock-out, to use the weapon of Co-operative production against the employers, and a group of operatives formed the London Building Company as a sort of Guild. But this seems to have died out soon after the ending of the dispute.

Potter was unwilling to accept this set-back to the movement for shorter hours. On the morrow of the dispute he proposed the renewal of the Joint Committee's mandate, and in the following year he got together at Derby a Trade Union Conference which agreed to form an United Kingdom Association for Shortening the Hours of Labour in the Building Trades, and thus endeavoured to give the movement a national basis. But again the master builders forestalled him by a counter-offensive of their own. Hitherto the building workers had been in receipt of a weekly wage. The employers now announced that they proposed to substitute a system of payment by the hour, which would enable the men to fix the working day at whatever length they chose. This meant, of course, that if the men chose to work only nine hours they would suffer a proportionate reduction in pay. This move was met by a series of strikes; but gradually the hourly system was introduced, and the movement for shorter hours for the time defeated. It was not revived till the masons on the North-East Coast struck for the "Nine Hours" in 1867, or generally conceded until after the successful Nine Hours strike of the engineers in 1871.

The building crisis of 1859-60 exerted, however, an important

influence on Trade Union organisation, both in the building industry and over a wider field. As we shall see later, it greatly stimulated the growth of permanent Trades Councils in the big industrial centres, and did a good deal to stimulate the sense of unity among the workers in different industries. And, by revealing the chaotic state of organisation in most of the building trades, it set on foot a movement for the creation of effective national Unions on the model either of the Stonemasons or of the Engineers. The Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, formed in 1860, followed closely the latter model. One of the leading promoters, Robert Applegarth, secretary of a local joiners' society at Sheffield, became General Secretary in 1862, and leapt at once to the front rank among Trade Union leaders. The Plasterers' Society, also formed in 1860, adopted rather the model of the stonemasons. Gradually, the other building trades followed these examples, and very slowly a more effective national organisation was built up.

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IV

The Miners

Meanwhile, a new movement of organisation was beginning among the miners. We have seen how Martin Jude's Miners' Association of Great Britain had finally broken down by 1848, and his attempt to revive it in 1850 had failed. The Unions did not completely die out, and almost everywhere at least some sort of pit organisation survived. But even on the North-East Coast Unionism became very feeble, and all contact between the separate coalfields was lost.

The first attempt at revival came in 1852, simultaneously on the North-East Coast and in Scotland. In 1855 there were numerous strikes and a further revival of Unionism in Durham and Northumberland, and in 1856 Alexander Macdonald, who had been energetically organising the Scottish miners, turned his attention to the English coalfields, and began his attempt to build up a new national organisation. In 1856 there was a great strike in Scotland, which lasted for fourteen weeks, and involved between 30,000 and 40,000 men. The Scottish Miners' Association was beaten; but it survived, and Macdonald, as its leader, was able to press on with the work of organisation. At length, in 1858, he managed to get a representative Conference of a number of the northern coalfields together at Ashton—Scotland, Yorkshire, Lancashire and Staffordshire being the chief centres which sent delegates. A resolution was adopted in favour of forming a National Miners' Association, and the miners began to develop their characteristic policy of pressing for legislative protection for their conditions of work. The Coal Mines Regulation Act of 1860, embodying the first ineffective permission to the men to appoint " checkweighers " to check the weight of the coal produced and so ensure the payment of correct piece-work wages, was directly due to Macdonald's organising efforts.

Meanwhile, other coalfields were moving. There was a great

strike in South Wales in 1857, ending in the defeat of the men, and another in West Yorkshire the following year, ending in a compromise. In 1860 there were lock-outs in South Staffordshire and South Yorkshire. And, despite defeats, everywhere the organisation was getting stronger. Dissatisfaction with the Act of 1860 intensified the unrest, and in 1863 Macdonald was able to get together at Leeds the first really representative Miners' Conference, with delegates from all the important coalfields throughout the country.

At this Conference, the Miners' National Association was definitely formed, with Macdonald as President and Mitchell of Yorkshire as Secretary. But the proceedings were not wholly harmonious. First, a struggle developed between Macdonald and a party which supported a certain John Towers, at that time editor of a journal called *The Miner*. This dispute seems to have been mainly personal; but into it entered the conflict between the section which wanted an aggressive industrial policy, and the Macdonaldites, who desired to concentrate chiefly on influencing Parliament and public opinion in favour of further legislation. The majority of the Conference pressed for a legal eight hours day for boys employed in the pits; but already the Durham men, with William Crawford as their spokesman, are found opposing this on the ground that a longer working day for boys is necessary to keep up the wages of the men.

Macdonald won the day, and the National Association developed chiefly as a political body. In this the state of trade played a part; for in 1864 and 1865 the coal trade was depressed, and the Unions were seriously weakened. In Northumberland, where Thomas Burt and Crawford had re-formed the Northumberland Miners' Association in 1863, the Union stood fast; but in Durham it was broken until Crawford reorganised it in 1869. In Staffordshire the men were beaten in a strike against wage reductions; and there were bitter complaints against the failure of the National Association to act as an effective co-ordinating body.

At length these quarrels led to a split. In 1869 the Lancashire Miners took the lead in calling a conference of the discontented districts. Macdonald had stood firmly for a completely decentralised control in industrial matters; the Lancashire men wanted a strong National Union, with central funds and an aggressive

centralised industrial policy. The Conference of 1869 launched the Amalgamated Association of Miners as a rival to the National Miners' Association.

Thenceforth for some time the miners were divided. Macdonald held Scotland and the East; the Amalgamated captured the West. Northumberland and Durham, Yorkshire, the Eastern Midlands and Scotland, with a few strong *enclaves* elsewhere, constituted the National; the Amalgamated held South and most of North Wales, Lancashire, the West Midlands, Cumberland, and the South-Western Counties. In 1873 the National had about 125,000 members, and the Amalgamated about 100,000. "They took to the left," said Macdonald in 1873, "and we held on our way to the right."

The chief centres of activity for the Amalgamated Miners' Association were Lancashire and South Wales. In 1871 there was a twelve weeks' strike in South Wales for an advance in wages, following a reduction enforced by the owners. Supported by the Amalgamated the men were victorious. But in 1873 the owners again demanded a reduction, and locked the men out. The result was inconclusive, the terms of settlement varying from pit to pit. Again, in 1875, the owners enforced a reduction, and the men struck. By this time the Amalgamated had exhausted its resources. The strike was beaten, and the men were compelled to accept a Sliding Scale system for the regulation of wages. An attempt was made to form a new Union, affiliated to Macdonald's National Association, out of the wreck; but save in Monmouthshire this gained few adherents. Unionism was nearly crushed out over the greater part of the South Wales coalfield, and the Sliding Scale system, to be described hereafter, took its place.

The collapse of the Amalgamated Miners' Association was due partly to this exhausting series of disputes in South Wales, and partly to another cause. In 1874 there was a miners' strike in Lancashire, and Cornish blacklegs were imported, under signed contracts, to break it. The leaders of the Amalgamated addressed the blacklegs, and induced them to return home. For this they were charged with conspiracy to induce breach of contract. Thomas Halliday, the General Secretary of the Amalgamated, offered to give an undertaking not to "seduce" men under contract; but the owners demanded an undertaking that he would

not try to make men who were working leave work, whether they were under contract or not. This being refused, the case was held over, or in other words the threat of sentence was held over the leaders' heads as a means of breaking the strike. For five years the Amalgamated had pursued a vigorous fighting policy. But under pressure of the employers and the law it broke down. About 1875 it ceased to exist.

In the meantime, the National Association had been pressing on with its policy of political agitation. At length, in 1872, it secured the passing of the Coal and Metalliferous Mines Acts, which form the basis of modern mining legislation. Industrially, it was far less militant than the Amalgamated, encouraging the district associations to pursue a pacific policy of conciliation. This policy was pursued with success in Durham and Northumberland. In 1871 the Northumberland coalowners recognised the Miners' Association, and the regular process of joint negotiations began. In the following year the Durham owners followed, and the Durham Joint Committee was established. In 1874 there were unofficial strikes in Durham, against wage reductions enforced on plea of bad trade. But, whereas in South Wales the Union fought the reductions, in Durham the Union accepted them. Three years later Durham also adopted the Sliding Scale for the regulation of wages.

The clearest idea of Macdonald's policy as leader of the miners can be gleaned from his presidential addresses at successive national conferences. He placed his chief faith in legislative action, and he was a strong advocate of working-class representation in Parliament. Industrially, he believed in conciliation, but was hostile to the Sliding Scale, which was favoured by the Northumberland and Durham leaders. He was a strong supporter of Co-operative production, and it was perhaps under his influence that, in 1873, the North-East Coast miners launched a Co-operative Mining Company, which failed four years later in the course of the slump. Apart from his work for the miners, he took an active part in the general work of the Trade Union movement. He was on the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress from 1871 to 1874, and in 1874 was returned at Stafford as one of the two first Labour Members of Parliament.

The National Miners' Association, or National Union of

Miners, as it was called later, suffered a severe set-back in the depression of the later 'seventies. After Macdonald's death in 1881, it ceased to be of any importance, and passed wholly into the hands of the Durham and Northumberland leaders, the other districts rapidly falling away. But, while it lasted, it undoubtedly performed a very valuable work, forcing to the front the lamentable conditions under which the miners had to work, and preparing the way for the modern code of mining legislation. Industrially, it was never so important as its rival ; but by its political agitation it accomplished a more lasting work.

The miners, during the 'sixties, came, as we have seen, to form an important third group within the Trade Union Movement. On the whole, they were allied in policy more closely to the textile workers than to the new " Amalgamated Societies " of the engineers and the carpenters. But there were cross-currents among them. Northumberland and Durham followed a policy more like that of Applegarth and Allan, and perhaps for this reason formed the most stable Unions. The Amalgamated Miners' Association resembled neither of the two dominant groups. The " National " depended so much on Macdonald's personality that it ceased to count when his influence was removed. On the whole, the miners were still very isolated, and exposed to a more primitive hostility to collective bargaining on their employers' part than the workers in other industries. For a few years, they built up the two largest and most imposing Trade Union bodies that had ever existed. But the effort wore them out. Save on the North-East Coast, they relapsed into a disorganisation from which they only recovered with the coming, in the 'eighties, of the new forces that created the Miners' Federation of Great Britain.

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CHAPTER IV. POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

1. The London Trades Council and the "Junta"
2. Working-class Politics in the 'Sixties
3. The International Working Men's Association

I

The London Trades Council and the "Junta"

We have seen how, during the builders' struggle of 1859, the workers in other industries were roused to great activity in organising help for the strikers. In all the big towns temporary joint committees of all trades were set up, and these both gathered money and rallied working-class opinion. There was nothing new in this. Again and again in the past history of the movement similar committees had been established, either to deal with a big strike or to organise resistance to some actual or proposed legal oppression, or to demand some particular reform. Often they had maintained their existence continuously over long periods, and become virtually permanent bodies. In London, Manchester and a few other centres, such joint bodies, or Trades Councils as we should call them nowadays, can be traced almost continuously during the period of unrest between 1816 and 1834, and on many separate occasions subsequently they were called into existence to deal with some special problem.

It is impossible to say in which centre the first lasting and permanent Trades Council was created. Liverpool, where the Trades Guardian Association dates back to 1848, has often been accorded the honour; but probably other towns have just as good a claim. The Aberdeen Council, for example, has been said to date from 1846, and Glasgow, Sheffield, Manchester and London have all long records of practically continuous organisation.

Be that as it may, the building dispute had undoubtedly a great influence both in creating new Councils and in giving to those which already existed a more permanent form. In this connection the influence of London was of outstanding importance. During the building dispute the other trades held regular meetings, and when the struggle ended it was decided to give the emergency organisation a definitely permanent character. Accordingly, in 1860, the London Trades Council was formed. It consisted of

an executive of fifteen members, to be elected at an Annual Delegate Conference of the trades of London. Its objects were defined as follows:—" That the duties of the Council shall be to watch over the general interests of labour, political and social, both in and out of Parliament; to use their influence in supporting any measure likely to benefit Trade Unions; also to publish (if necessary) an Annual Trades Union Directory."

The objects proposed for the new body were thus clearly meant to be political as well as industrial, and from the first the Council was actively engaged in various forms of political agitation on behalf of Trade Unionism. But it had also a very important industrial function, no less clearly defined by its constitution. " Council to have power to investigate cases of appeal made to them by trades in distress. If, after strict investigation, they are found worthy of support, they shall recommend them to trades for assistance."

It is probable that the form of this organisation was largely copied from the Glasgow Trades Council, which, under the skilful leadership of the old Owenite, Alexander Campbell, had assumed much the same form and policy in 1857, and was, in 1861, already proposing the creation of a General Federation of all the Trade Unions in Scotland. But, even if Glasgow anticipated London, it was London's adoption of the new form of organisation which was of decisive importance. For in London were the head offices of the growing Amalgamated Societies of Engineers and Carpenters, and it was mainly under the influence of their leading officials that the new Council grew. Its first secretary was George Howell, a bricklayer and close associate of Applegarth and Allan; and in 1862 he was succeeded by George Odger, by trade a shoemaker, and the leading orator of the working-class Radicalism of the time.

Mr. and Mrs. Webb have given to the group of men who now began, from London, to dominate the Trade Union Movement, the name of " the Junta." Allan of the Engineers, Applegarth of the Carpenters, Daniel Guile of the Ironfounders, Edwin Coulson of the Bricklayers, and George Odger of the London Trades Council—these men and their immediate associates were at the head of the leading working-class organisations in London, and, acting together, occupied an extraordinarily strong strategic position.

Macdonald and Campbell in Scotland, John Kane of the Ironworkers and William Crawford in Durham, Thomas Halliday in Manchester, were no less important leaders; but they were scattered, whereas the Junta was together, and right at the centre of political gravity.

The London Trades Council became for some years the instrument through which the Junta exercised its leadership. Almost every Trade Union which became involved in any considerable strike had to appeal to it for help; for the credentials issued by the London Trades Council came to be the key to success in securing financial aid from other Unions. The Council became in effect not a mere joint committee of the London trades, but a central Cabinet for the Trade Union Movement as a whole. Of its political activities we shall have to speak later; here we are concerned with it solely as a controlling industrial authority.

This position of dominance was not won without opposition. The provincial leaders were inclined to resent it; and in London, George Potter, whom we have met already as the builders' leader in 1859, was soon in open opposition to the policy of the Junta. For the leaders of the Amalgamated Societies were strongly in favour of a moderate policy of conciliation, and frowned severely on strikes which they considered as inopportune or provocative. In 1865 matters came to a head when the Junta opposed, while Potter supported, the strike of the Staffordshire ironworkers. The London Trades Council denounced Potter as a "strike-monger."

George Potter, on his side, was by no means a person to be neglected. For, apart from his great personal popularity, he was editor and controlled the policy of the one really effective working-class newspaper, *The Beehive*, which he had started in 1861 as the organ of militant Trade Unionism. From 1865 Potter and the Junta, and above all Potter and Applegarth, were permanently at loggerheads, and Potter was trying to appeal from the London ascendency of the Junta to the wider Trade Union Movement in the provincial centres.

In order to do this effectively, he needed to have some London organisation behind him. For this purpose, he created in 1866 the London Working Men's Association, a primarily political body, which became for a time a lesser rival to the Trades Council.

Under its auspices, as we shall see, Potter successfully called the famous Trades Union Conference of 1867, the immediate precursor of the Trades Union Congress.

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II

Working-class Politics in the 'Sixties

The group of leaders whose ascendency has just been described was active in the political as well as in the industrial sphere. In the slow death of Chartism after 1848 little had survived of independent working-class political action. But in its latter days the Chartist Movement had taken on a markedly international character, and a tradition of sympathy with revolutionary agitations on the Continent survived its eclipse as a national movement. In 1854 Ernest Jones had formed the International Welcome and Protest Committee, which organised welcomes to revolutionary refugees and protests against the repressions practised over Europe by the triumphant counter-revolution. Through a series of changes of name this body survived until 1860, when it finally expired as the International Association. But a part of the work was speedily taken over by other bodies. In the 'sixties, under Odger's leadership, the London Trades Council took an active part in organising welcomes and protests. Garibaldi became an idol of the London workers, Kossuth was enthusiastically received, deep sympathy was expressed for the Polish revolt. And, in the American Civil War, when opinion in Great Britain was sharply divided, the Trades Council unhesitatingly took the side of the North. In all these demonstrations, however, the workers went no further than the majority of middle-class Radicals were prepared to go. There was no "Socialist" intention behind their internationalism until the coming of the International Working Men's Association. And of that more will be said in the next section.

Apart from its international activity, Chartism was virtually dead by 1856. But within a few years fresh political movements began to arise. Again the demand was for Manhood Suffrage and the Ballot; but this time the movement was purely constitutional, and had behind it none of that half-blind revolutionary impulse which

had been the real driving force of working-class Chartism. The new leaders wanted votes for the workers; but they did not want a revolution, and they were prepared to work to the fullest extent with any middle-class Liberals who were willing to endorse their programme.

As early as 1857 new organisations began to spring up. In that year was established the Northern Reform Union, with its headquarters at Newcastle, and John Kane, the Ironworkers' Secretary, as one of its moving spirits. Within the next few years a great many similar associations arose. In London, where a National Reform Association was already in existence, a North London Political Union was formed in 1859, with Benjamin Lucraft, a well-known Trade Union leader, as its secretary. A Midland Counties Reform Association was active in 1860, and in the same year a National Conference held at the Guildhall in London proposed the formation of a national Reform League on the model of the Anti-Corn Law League. Reform meetings were held all over the country. Old Chartists, such as Ernest Jones, G. W. M. Reynolds, and W. P. Roberts, Trade Union leaders, such as Kane, Lucraft and Howell, joined with middle-class Radicals such as Bright and Edmund Beales in addressing them. So far, the movement was on a basis of co-operation between the workers and the parliamentary Radicals.

Before long, however, the Trade Unionists began to move independently. In 1862 Applegarth and his friends of the Junta and the London Trades Council created the Trade Union Political Union, with a programme of Ballot and Universal Suffrage. In the following year this body took the name of the Manhood Suffrage and Vote by Ballot Association, and early in 1865 broadened its basis, and became the National Reform League, with Edmund Beales, the Radical barrister, as its President and George Howell as Secretary. Though it thus opened its ranks to middle-class supporters, it continued to be essentially a working-class body, based mainly on Trade Union affiliations throughout the country. Odger was, with Beales, its principal orator.

At the same time, mainly in the North of England, a second national organisation grew up. In 1861 the Leeds Working Men's Parliamentary Reform Association convened a conference of the Reform societies of Lancashire and Yorkshire, " to consider the

position of the Liberal Party " in relation to Reform. This was followed by a national conference held in London in 1862, and attended by the leading Radical Members of Parliament. A resolution was carried in favour of Universal Suffrage; but the Conference also called for the co-operation of classes in working for Reform, and urged Reformers to concentrate for the present on household suffrage, the ballot, redistribution of seats, and triennial Parliaments, instead of pressing at once for the whole working-class programme.

A further conference was to have been held in 1863; but the cotton famine, then at its height, caused a postponement. In 1864 the Conference met, and formed the National Reform Union. Reform Societies and Trade Unions were invited to affiliate, and a considerable number joined.

These two bodies—the League and the Union—shared between them the work of agitation for Reform. The League was mainly working class, and was almost completely dominated by the Trade Unionists. The Union had many working-class adherents, but was mainly dominated by the middle-class Radicals. In 1866 the League had seventy branches—nineteen in London and fifty-one in the Provinces, including most of the principal centres. In the same year the Union had one hundred and thirty branches, mainly in the Midlands and the North of England. The League was centred on London, the Union on Manchester.

The parliamentary history of the Reform Movement of the 'sixties has been often told. After the Act of 1832 the general attitude of the Whig party was that " finality " had been reached in the extension of the franchise. Not only the Chartist demands, but moderate plans for further Reform were brushed aside. Despite Lord John Russell's conversion to moderate Reform, the Whigs continued to coldshoulder the question right up to Palmerston's death in 1865. When at length that formidable obstacle was removed, it became clear that, in face of the growing agitation in the country, the Whig Ministry would have to take up the matter. Russell introduced his moderate Reform Bill in 1866, only to be defeated by the secession of a section of his party—the " Adullamites," headed by Robert Lowe. The Whigs fell, and the Tories under Derby and Disraeli assumed power. But the question had still to be tackled; for the feeling in the country was too strong to

be ignored. Disraeli introduced his famous Reform Bill of 1867, with its proposals for " fancy franchises." But in the House of Commons one amendment after another was carried, and the Bill emerged, shorn of its fancy provisions, as the Reform Act of 1867. Disraeli had " caught the Whigs bathing and stolen their clothes." The Tories had carried the Reform Act. The miners in the villages and the agricultural workers were left voteless (until 1885); but the workers in the towns had at length won their way to the franchise.

Best remembered of the incidents in the campaign which led up to this victory is the prohibited Hyde Park meeting of 1866, when the Reform League's projected demonstration in the Park was forbidden by the Commissioner of Police acting on the instructions of the Home Secretary. Despite the prohibition, the League went on with the demonstration, and a vast crowd, headed by Beales, Howell, Applegarth and other leaders, reached the Park only to find the gates closed against them. Outside the railings the huge multitude surged, demanding admission. By intention, or by the mere pressure of numbers against them, the park railings were broken down, and the crowd surged into the Park, where a hundred impromptu meetings were held despite the police. Meanwhile, the official leaders had led off a section of their followers to Trafalgar Square, where a great meeting of protest against the Government's action was held.

Whether the Park railings were broken by accident or by design, the Hyde Park demonstration scared the governing classes, and was a big factor in winning the vote for the urban workers.

On the passing of the Reform Act, the leaders of the Reform League held that its work was done, and decided to dissolve, giving place to other bodies, of whose fortunes we shall speak later, designed to promote working-class representation in Parliament. But the National Reform Union lived on, as an auxiliary of the Liberal Party; and at a later stage many Liberal-Labour Trade Unionists were associated with it. In 1875 both George Howell, then Secretary of the Trades Union Congress, and George Potter, fallen by this time from his position as leader of the militants, were members of its Executive Council.

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III

The International Working Men's Association

While the British Trade Union leaders were conducting this struggle for Parliamentary Reform, they were also playing some part in a working-class movement of a very different character, In 1864 a conference held in London formed the International Working Men's Association, of which Karl Marx, then a refugee living in London, soon assumed the leadership. For some years we are presented with the paradoxical sight of men like Applegarth and Odger engaged at the same time in fomenting revolutionary working-class movements on the Continent of Europe and in conducting, largely in alliance with middle-class Liberals, a strictly constitutional struggle for franchise reform in their own country, where they stood, moreover, in Trade Union affairs, for a policy of conciliation and were strongly hostile to the " strike-mongering " of Potter and his friends.

In order to understand this seeming paradox, it is necessary to recall what was said earlier of the internationalist record of the British working class. London had long, and especially since 1848, been the home of Socialist and nationalist political refugees. Thence Mazzini organised his Italians; thence Marx inspired the growing Socialist movement of Europe. The Continent appeared to Liberals a place of counter-revolutionary triumph, in which Liberal principles were at a severe discount. To the British workers, it appeared, too, as a place in which Trade Unions were severely repressed, and the rights of combination denied. Even men who were strict constitutionalists under British conditions might well feel that the policy of many of the continental Governments admitted of no answer except in terms of revolution.

In the minds of the British working-class leaders, of whatever complexion, no clear line was drawn between continental nationalism and the class movements of the continental workers. The

Chartists, and after them the London Trades Council, demonstrated actively in support of Italian and Polish nationalism. Mazzini was a close friend of many of the working-class leaders, and Polish exiles played an active part in many British Radical movements. The Socialists were still but a small section, and little regarded. The Communist Manifesto, drafted by Marx and Engels and issued by the Communist League in 1848, had clearly proclaimed the Socialist doctrine of the class-struggle; but it was forgotten, save by a few, in the subsequent reaction. The first volume of Marx's *Capital* did not appear until 1867. Marx himself was known rather as a learned German political exile than as the leader of any clearly-marked Socialist movement.

Indeed, even on the Continent, Socialism was only just beginning to re-shape itself as an independent force. The French movement was divided between the followers of Proudhon and the small revolutionary group led by Blanqui. In Germany, Lassalle's General Workmen's Union was only formed in 1863, and the Marxist propaganda of Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht only began about the same time. In Russia, Bakunin had scarcely emerged. Italy was still wholly under the Mazzini influence. Everywhere little Socialist groups were growing up; but only in the 'sixties did they emerge into prominence.

In founding the International Working Men's Association, therefore, the British leaders, at any rate, meant no more than a gesture of sympathy with continental movements of the oppressed. The meeting which formed the " First International " was conceived by Odger and other London Trade Union leaders. It included, besides the British elements, continental refugees of all complexions from Mazzinians to Marxists. The first, provisional, committee included most diverse elements. Rival drafts for the rules and inaugural address were drawn up by a follower of Mazzini and by an Owenite, only to be brushed aside by a third draft prepared by Marx himself, which put the movement definitely on a purely working-class basis. It defined the object of the Association as the conquest of political power by the workers, regarded as the only means of improving the conditions of labour. But it also urged the workers to master the mysteries of international politics and to vindicate the simple laws of morality and justice in international affairs. "To fight for such a foreign

policy forms a part of the general struggle for the emancipation of the working classes. Workers of all countries, unite!"

The British leaders who subscribed to these doctrines probably saw in them no more than expressions of international friendship of the workers. Certainly they had no conception of what the First International was to become. But from the first it was, in their eyes, only a side-show. They were primarily engaged first in the struggle for the Reform Act and then in the great contest for legal emancipation described in the next chapter. From the outset Marx dominated the International, and it travelled the road he had marked out for it.

The International Working Men's Association was governed by a General Council nominally representing the different countries, but actually composed of British working-class leaders and foreign refugees resident in London. Applegarth, Odger, Henry Broadhurst, Howell, Lucraft, and W. R. Cremer were among the British Trade Union leaders who were associated with it. J. G. Eccarius, a nationalised German and a follower of Marx, was its Secretary. Left largely to do as he pleased, Marx concentrated his attention mainly on building up the organisation abroad. From Germany, France, Italy, Russia and many other countries he had no difficulty in gathering adherents to the new body, which rapidly became a power throughout Europe. But very soon dissensions began to develop. The Germans were mostly strict Marxists; but from Italy and Russia and Spain came a large Anarchist contingent, strongly opposed to the working-class parliamentary action advocated by the Marxian Socialists. In Germany, the International was at variance with Lassalle; in France, the followers of Proudhon fought with the Blanquists. The Mazzinians in Italy had dropped out when Marx obtained control; and within the International the strongest single influence against Marx was that of the Russian, Michael Bakunin. But these dissensions, though severe almost from the outset in the Conferences of the International, did not at first prevent the spread of its influence, or much affect the policy of the General Council, which Marx continued to control.

The general history of the First International falls outside the scope of this book, which has to deal only with its influence in Great Britain. The other countries had each its own National Federal Council of the International, representing the various

affiliated bodies. Great Britain, as the seat of international government, had no Federal Council of its own, but only its preponderant representation on the General Council of the International as a whole. At a fairly early stage, the formation of a British Federal Council was mooted; but Marx, who saw that such a body would slip wholly out of his control and into the hands of the moderate British Trade Union leaders, successfully obstructed this development until 1871. There are amusing passages in Marx's correspondence in which he describes his successful manipulation of the British leaders.

While the British leaders were associated with the International, no powerful British section ever arose. A number of Trade Unions—among them the Bricklayers and the Bootmakers—joined, together with some miscellaneous working-class societies. The London Trades Council refused to join. And from 1867 onwards, as the revolutionary character of the continental sections became more clear, the British Trade Union leaders gradually fell away.

There was another reason for this withdrawal. All over the Continent, the growth of the International had caused widespread alarm, and it was being fiercely denounced in the continental press. The British newspapers re-echoed these denunciations, and applied them to the British Trade Union leaders, who were at that time chiefly engaged in seeking to prove their respectability before the Royal Commission on Trade Unions, in order to secure an assured legal status. These attacks caused the leaders to scrutinise the affairs of the International more closely, and to consider as well the tactical disadvantages of association with it. Most of them withdrew. Marx said that they had " offered up the principle of Trade Unionism on the altar of middle-class legitimisation."

Applegarth, who, if he knew how to appear on due occasion a moderate of the moderates, appears really to have held at this time more advanced political views than most of his colleagues, did not resign at this stage, despite the attacks directed by name against him in *The Times* and elsewhere. He had, indeed, taken a more active part in the International than any other of the British leaders. But at length he too fell away, when the ill-starred Paris Commune, generally denounced as the work of the International, brought the issue of revolution finally and decisively to the front.

The Trade Union leaders having withdrawn, the British section, now composed of less manageable elements, became restive, and Marx was compelled to yield and to allow a British Federal Council to be set up side by side with the General Council. This body, of which Maltman Barry was Chairman, and John Hales, Secretary, attempted in 1872 to form a new British working-class party, wholly independent of other parties, for political action and agitation. But the leaders could not agree among themselves, and after an internal split the movement speedily broke down.

In the same year the International itself virtually came to an end. Every year the quarrel between the followers of Bakunin and Marx had become more bitter. Then the defeat of the Paris Commune, encouraging reaction throughout Europe, had administered a further shattering blow. At the Congress of 1872 mutual recriminations reached their height. After a strong debate, the Bakuninists were expelled from the International. But Marx, apparently despairing of success in Europe, moved the transference of the International headquarters to New York. There, four years later, the great First International was quietly dissolved. But it left behind it the nucleus of a Socialist Movement all over Europe. The German Social Democratic Party had been formed in 1869, and in 1875, uniting with the Lassallians on the basis of the famous Gotha Programme, assumed its modern form, and survived despite Bismarck's Anti-Socialist Law of 1878. In France, the Marxist *Parti Ouvrier* was formed in 1876, and in the same year the Marxian Socialist Labour Party was founded in the United States. Except in England, modern Socialism was beginning. Here a decade was to pass between the collapse of the International and the coming of the Social Democratic Federation.

BOOKS

Postgate. The Workers' International.
Marx. The Civil War in France.
Beer. History of British Socialism, Vol. II.

CHAPTER V. THE LABOUR LAWS, 1864-1871

1. Master and Servant—Trade Union Conferences
2. The Sheffield Outrages and the Royal Commission on Trade Unions
3. The Labour Laws of 1871

I

Master and Servant—Trade Union Conferences

While the political movements described in the last chapter were developing, the Trade Unions were also drawing together industrially, and conducting a combined agitation for the improvement of the laws affecting the workers. The first phase of this struggle opened in 1864, when the Unions began their concerted campaign for the amendment of the Master and Servant Acts. The second, and far more critical, phase began in 1867, when the public outcry which followed the "Sheffield outrages" and the decision of the courts in the famous case of *Hornby* v. *Close* threatened the Unions with further legal repression. The third phase extended from the passing of the Trade Union Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act in 1871 to the further drastic amendment of the "Labour Laws" in the workers' interest in 1875. During these critical eleven years the public status of Trade Unionism was profoundly changed, the Trades Union Congress was founded, and the Trade Union Movement assumed something like its modern form.

The new development began in 1864, with the decision of the Glasgow Trades Council, under the leadership of Alexander Campbell, to set on foot a national campaign for the amendment of the Master and Servant Acts. The need was very great. We have seen already how in the mining industry the employers used these Acts against the workers, and how the Unions, in the 'forties, attempted to meet them by employing W. P. Roberts as their "attorney-general" to fight every case. But the grievance was not confined to the miners. A whole series of Acts, from the Statute of Artificers of 1563 down to the Master and Servant Act of 1824, subjected the workers to severe penalties for breach of contract, for leaving work unfinished, and for similar crimes against their employers. For such offences, the worker was liable to imprisonment on the verdict of a single justice, who might be

himself an interested employer. He was liable to summary arrest on the order of such a justice, and though, under an Act of 1848, he might in England be summoned instead of being arrested by warrant, this Act did not apply to Scotland, where arrest by warrant was still the only procedure. An employer could give evidence against a worker in his own cause; but a worker could not give evidence against his employer. Imprisonment was the only penalty in the workman's case; for breach of contract was regarded as a criminal offence. But an employer who broke his contract with a workman could only be ordered to pay the amount due, or at the most sued for damages. The law was thus grossly unfair, and was based on the conception of compulsory servile labour. And in Scotland it was even worse than in England, where in most cases the procedure was by summons instead of warrant.

This helps to explain why the initiative was taken by the Glasgow Trades Council. But another cause was probably Alexander Macdonald's close connection with the Council; for the weight of the law fell far most hardly upon the miners. There was, however, in all trades amply enough to be put right; and when the Glasgow Trades Council convened a national Trade Union Conference in London to deal with the matter, most of the big Unions eagerly took the question up, and all the best-known leaders, including Campbell, Applegarth, Macdonald, and George Potter, attended the meeting, which deserves to be regarded as in effect the first Trades Union Congress. A Committee was appointed to carry on the agitation; and, under its influence, local Trades Councils were formed in a number of fresh centres to help. J. M. Cobbett, one of William Cobbett's sons and M.P. for Oldham, agreed to introduce a Bill into Parliament on the Unions' behalf.

Success was not secured until 1867, when at length the Master and Servant Act became law. The power of proceeding by warrant was abolished, and summary arrest thus prevented. Hearings were to be in open court, and not in a justice's private house, and a single justice was no longer able to act. Workmen were allowed to give evidence on their own behalf. Power of imprisonment was retained, but was confined to cases of serious injury to persons or property. In normal cases fines or damages took its place. The Act of 1867 was by no means satisfactory, since

it left breach of contract still in certain cases a criminal offence. But it was a great success to have won even so much.

The Trade Union Conference of 1864 prepared the way for further developments. There was urgent need for some co-ordinating authority in the Trade Union world. The National Association of United Trades for the Protection of Labour, founded in 1845, was indeed still nominally in existence; but it had shrunk to a few thousand members, and no important Union was connected with it. In its latter days it had occupied itself solely in pressing for the establishment of Boards of Conciliation, and its Secretary, Thomas Winter, had again and again tried to get Parliament to take up this question. At length, in 1867, the Association got the abortive Conciliation Act passed into law. This Act, which proposed to constitute local Courts of Conciliation, on the basis of a wide suffrage, for friendly adjustment of trade disputes, was from the first a dead letter. But the effort of promoting it was too much for the National Association, which expired in the year of its passage.

We have seen how, in the absence of any other central agency, the London Trades Council for a time usurped the function of co-ordinating Trade Union action. This, however, did not suit either the rising Trades Councils of the other big towns, or the big Unions, such as the Miners, whose membership was mainly in the North. Nor could the London Trades Council effectively bring the Unions together, or organise mutual help in strikes.

In the early 'sixties, the need for this was felt to be very great. Confronted with the rise of new powerful Unions, the employers in one industry after another, and especially in the coal mines, resorted to the wholesale use of the lock-out. A Yorkshire miner complained in 1866 that he had been locked out for two years out of the past six. In these circumstances the Sheffield Trades Council, prompted by the Yorkshire miners, convened in 1866 a second national Trade Union Conference to consider methods of organised Trade Union defence against the weapon of the lock-out. Two hundred thousand Trade Unionists were represented, and the Conference decided to form a permanent body, the United Kingdom Alliance of Organised Trades, to provide a central fund for the support of trades in which lock-outs occurred. Nearly all the big Unions were represented at the Conference, at which the

"Amalgamated Societies'" representatives strongly denounced a militant strike policy, and urged the importance of conciliation. But of the 200,000, only Societies representing 60,000 affiliated to the Alliance, and by the end of 1867 the membership had fallen to less than 25,000. The Alliance remained in existence until 1870, when it was finally wound up. But it was from the first a failure.

The principal reason for its collapse was lack of funds. The rich Amalgamated Societies did not join, and the bodies which did—the Miners of South Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire, the Amalgamated Tailors, the Boilermakers, the Cotton Spinners, the Ironworkers, and a few others—had troubles enough on their hands. There was, moreover, the greatest difficulty in defining a "lock-out," as distinguished from a strike, and this led to internal dissensions. The Alliance was governed by an Executive drawn from the Sheffield area, with William Dronfield, the veteran leader of Sheffield Trade Unionism, as its Secretary, and by a "Judicial Committee," drawn from the nine districts into which the organisation was divided, which dealt with applications for help. But, with the speedy exhaustion of the funds, this mechanism ceased to work, and in practice, the Alliance was governed by Dronfield and the Sheffield Executive. It never acquired a truly representative character in relation to the country as a whole.

A second reason for the failure of the Alliance was the sudden shifting of Trade Union attention, in 1867, the first year of its formal existence, from industrial action to parliamentary agitation. For in 1866 occurred the Sheffield outrages, and in 1867 the case of *Hornby* v. *Close*. And over these two issues the battle was at once fairly joined between the Trade Unions and the forces of legal and political repression.

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Howell. Labour Legislation. Labour Movements. Labour Leaders.

II

The Sheffield Outrages and the Royal Commission on Trade Unions

The "Sheffield Outrages" were a series of acts of violence directed chiefly against blacklegs. The Sheffield cutlery trades were organised in a large number of very small societies, each confined to a single narrow craft, and aiming at a rigid exclusion of non-society men. It had long been the way of these tradesmen, if a non-unionist was given employment or if a unionist broke the rules of his society, to make things hot for him by the process known as "rattening." His tools were abstracted, or, in more serious cases, sand or a can of gunpowder was inserted in the machine on which he was working. In some cases vengeance was carried into the blackleg's home, and a can of gunpowder thrown down his chimney. Such outrages had occurred from time to time for many years before 1866; but in 1865 and 1866 they became numerous, and in October, 1866, the house of a man named Fearneyhough was blown up, and the crime charged to agents of the Saw Grinders' Union. At once there was a great outcry, in which the employers, then actively pushing their campaign of lock-outs against the Trade Unions, eagerly joined. Penal legislation for the suppression of the Trade Unions was demanded; Trade Unionism in general was denounced as a criminal conspiracy against the public.

The first proposal, put forward by the Sheffield Town Council, was for an enquiry into the outrages alone. This did not at all suit the Unions; and the London Trades Council at once replied with a demand for an enquiry into the whole subject of Trade Unionism. This demand was successful; and, early in 1867, the Government passed the Trade Union Commission Act, setting up a Royal Commission "to enquire and report on the organisation and rules of trades and other associations, with power to investigate any recent acts of intimidation, outrage, or wrong alleged to have

been promoted, encouraged, or connived at by such Trade Unions or other associations." But, even with the extended scope of the enquiry, the outlook for the Unions seemed black enough, especially when William Broadhead and other members of the Sheffield Grinders' Unions confessed to a series of crimes paid for out of Union funds. Everywhere the Unions and Trades Councils passed strong resolutions condemning the crimes, and calling for the most stringent enquiry. But middle-class opinion inevitably hardened against Trade Unionism and the demand for repressive legislation was re-doubled. It would probably have gone hard with them had it not been too late to draw back from the step of extending the franchise to the urban workers, which made the Unions for the first time a political power.

Just when the agitation against the Unions was at its height came the decision of the Court of Queen's Bench in the case of *Hornby* v. *Close*. The formation of the " Amalgamated Societies," with their high contributions and benefits, had made the adequate protection of Trade Union funds against defaulting officials a matter of vital importance. In 1855, when the Friendly Societies Act was before Parliament, the Metropolitan Trades Committee a forerunner of the London Trades Council, succeeded in getting a clause inserted for this purpose. The clause laid down that any association established for a purpose not illegal might, on depositing its rules with the Registrar of Friendly Societies, have the advantage of getting disputes among its members dealt with summarily by the magistrates. Under this section of the Act the leading Societies concerned, including the Engineers, Carpenters and Joiners, Ironfounders and Boilermakers, had deposited their rules, and proceeded, where necessary, against defaulting officers.

In 1867 the Court of Queen's Bench decided, in a case brought by the Boilermakers' Society against its Bradford secretary, that a Trade Union could not come within the scope of the Friendly Societies Acts, and was, moreover, so far " in restraint of trade " as to be an illegal, though not a criminal, association. The immediate result was not only to deprive Trade Unions of the legal protection for their funds which they had in fact enjoyed for more than twenty years, but practically to outlaw Trade Unionism altogether, so that no man knew where the next blow would fall.

At once the Trade Unions proceeded to take action, but not,

unfortunately, at first united action. The Amalgamated Societies, chiefly anxious to protect their own funds and to dissociate themselves from the Sheffield outrages, determined, instead of organising the whole movement for a campaign to secure redress, to act independently on their own behalf. Robert Applegarth took the lead in this, and in January 1867 the Junta set up a new body, called the " Conference of Amalgamated Trades," and consisting entirely of their own friends. This body at once attempted to take into its hands the entire conduct of the Trade Union case, including not only the legal position but also the whole work of the Royal Commission.

Their first task was to influence the composition of the Commission itself, which the Government proposed to appoint entirely from persons supposed to be impartial. One friend of the Unions, the Christian Socialist Thomas Hughes, was given a seat; but the Conference strongly pressed for further representation. A working-class Commissioner was suggested; but such a thing was then unheard of. Finally, the Government agreed to appoint Frederic Harrison, the Positivist, long a staunch supporter of the Amalgamated Societies and of the moderate Trade Unionism which they represented. Permission was further obtained for representative Trade Unionists to be present during the examination of witnesses; and the Conference selected Applegarth for this task.

This assumption of authority by the Junta did not pass without challenge. After his quarrel with the London Trades Council in 1865, over their failure to support the Staffordshire Puddlers' strike, George Potter had founded the London Working Men's Association, with the old Chartist, Robert Hartwell, as Secretary. With the political activities of this body we shall have to deal later; but at this stage it became the instrument for organising the Trade Unions which the Junta had excluded from its counsels. In March 1867 Potter and Hartwell called a national Trade Union Conference to deal with the situation created by *Hornby* v. *Close* and the appointment of the Royal Commission. There was a big attendance, 200,000 Trade Unionists being represented directly, and another 400,000, it is said, indirectly by the local Trades Councils. These figures, even allowing for great exaggeration, make it by far the most representative Trade Union gathering that had ever been, despite the absence of the Amalga-

mated Societies. Alexander Macdonald, John Kane, Connolly of the Stonemasons, and Allen of the Boilermakers, were among the prominent leaders in attendance.

This Conference proceeded to appoint a rival committee to watch the progress of the Commission, and take steps for safeguarding the legal position of the Unions. The Committee at once passed a resolution deploring the action of the Conference of Amalgamated Trades and the refusal of the London Trades Council, on " objections wholly and solely party and personal," to take part in calling the Conference. Indeed, it is clear that the object of the Junta was to keep the conduct of the Trade Union case to themselves, since they feared that the attitude of the more militant Unions would prejudice their own claims. In opposition to this, the March Conference Committee elected Connolly, its Chairman, to attend the sittings of the Royal Commission, and present the Trade Union case.

The dice, however, were loaded on the side of the Junta. The friendly members of the Royal Commission were their friends, and early in the proceedings they allowed Connolly to be excluded without protest for a speech to which objection was taken. Thereafter the conduct of the case fell into Applegarth's hands, in collaboration with Hughes and Harrison. Everything was done to divert attention from the more militant Unions to the moderate and " friendly " activities of the Amalgamated Societies, and to dissociate these, not only from the outrages of the Sheffield type, but from all forms of militant Trade Union action. The work of the Unions as friendly societies was strongly stressed; courts of conciliation were advocated as the alternative to strikes and lockouts. In every way, Trade Unionism was made to appear almost unbelievably respectable, as indeed, so far as the Amalgamated Societies were concerned, it really was.

That Applegarth, Harrison and Hughes conducted their case with extraordinary skill is evident. When the reports of the outrages at Sheffield and other places appeared, attention was successfully drawn away from them, and it was shown that only a very few small Unions were in any way implicated in such practices. From a wholesale attack on Trade Unions, the Royal Commission began to turn into a justification of them, where they were really as respectable as Applegarth and his friends made out.

This was seen when the Royal Commission made its Final Report. Even the majority recommended the legalisation of Trade Unions, provided they were not formed to do acts involving breach of contract, or to refuse to work with any particular person. Under certain conditions, the majority also proposed that protection should be given to Trade Union funds. But they held that this protection should be confined to Unions whose rules were free from restrictive clauses, such as the prohibition of piece-work or contract work, the limitation of apprentices, or any restrictions on the use of machinery. These last provisions would, of course, have hit directly at the Amalgamated Societies which, though they had tried to keep the fact in the background, based their policy largely on restrictions of these kinds.

The minority, composed of Harrison, Hughes and the Earl of Lichfield, brought forward a separate report of their own, of which the gist was the proposal that all special legal discriminations against the workers should be repealed. No act, they urged, should be unlawful when committed by a workman unless it would be unlawful if committed by someone else; and no act done in combination should be criminal unless it would be so if done by a single person.

It remained to be seen what action the Government would take. The Conference of Amalgamated Trades at once began to press for legislation on the lines of the Minority Report, and Frederic Harrison drafted for them a comprehensive Bill based on its recommendations, and embodying a complete scheme for the legalisation of Trade Unions and strikes, and the protection of Trade Union funds. The position was still doubtful when, in 1868, the Manchester Trades Council convened a further national Trade Union Conference to consider the position. At this meeting, there were acrimonious disputes between those who supported the proposals of the Junta, and those who held that it was better for the Trade Unions to maintain a fighting attitude outside the law. But, on this issue, many who had opposed the Junta's arbitrary assumption of power felt with them, and a resolution of confidence in the policy of the Conference of Amalgamated Trades was carried on the motion of John Kane, the Ironworkers' Secretary, by this time a strong advocate of moderation, and two years later the sponsor of the sliding scale under the Iron Conciliation Board of 1869.

The Manchester meeting of 1868 is generally regarded as the beginning of the Trades Union Congress. The Junta, indeed, still held aloof, and their Amalgamated Societies were not represented at it. But Kane's success began their conversion, and in 1869 Odger and Howell attended the Congress held at Birmingham, and managed to get the Junta's full programme accepted. The Conference of Amalgamated Trades, however, continued in existence as a separate body, and it was not until 1871 that the Junta finally accepted the Trades Union Congress as the central authority for the Trade Union Movement. As we shall see later, by that time the weaknesses of the Junta's strategy had become more evident, and even they saw the need of getting the entire Trade Union Movement united for the second critical phase of the struggle.

BOOKS

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Howell. Labour Legislation, Labour Movements, Labour Leaders.
Royal Commission. Reports and Evidence.

III

The Labour Laws of 1871

The General Election of 1868 was the first at which large numbers of workmen were able to vote. A number of Labour candidates appeared in the field; but it was of more effect that everywhere Trade Unions and Trades Councils pestered the candidates with questions about their attitude on the problem of Trade Union rights. A considerable number of Members, with the new electorate in mind, gave favourable answers, and returned pledged to support the Trade Union case. The Liberal Government, however, was hostile, and had no desire to introduce any legislation at all. In these circumstances, the Unions kept up a vigorous agitation, holding meetings throughout the country, and ceaselessly lobbying the Members in the House of Commons.

For some time the Government refused to make any concession, urging that Trade Union funds were already sufficiently protected. This was a reference to the Larceny and Embezzlement Act of 1868, known as Gurney's Act, which had enabled members of a co-partnership to prosecute their defaulting officials. Gurney's Act had no specific reference to Trade Unions; but actually Trade Unions were successful in taking action under it. It did not, however, give the protection the Unions wanted; for, though it enabled defaulters to be convicted, it did not make possible the recovery of the stolen money. The Unions, therefore, continued to press the Government, which at length agreed to pass a purely temporary measure to safeguard the Unions until permanent legislation was carried through. The Trade Union (Protection of Funds) Act accordingly became law in 1869. But still the Government was in no hurry to give the Unions the legal status which they desired.

Throughout 1870 the pressure was maintained; and at length, in 1811, the Government produced its Bill. It was then that the defects of the Junta's policy became plain. In one respect,

the Bill gave the Unions all they wanted. No Union was to be outside the law merely because it was in restraint of trade. All Unions whose rules did not infringe the criminal law were to be allowed to register, and to secure the protection which registration conferred. And, in addition, the Unions were to be free from external interference in their internal affairs, and were not to sue or be sued in a court of law in respect of such affairs.

But with this concession of the points chiefly pressed by the Junta, the Government coupled severe penal clauses against all forms of " molestation," " obstruction," or " intimidation," and against picketing of premises in pursuance of a trade dispute. The Government, in fact, took the Junta at its word. If the Trade Unions were really no more than friendly societies and bodies for promoting industrial conciliation, they could have no reason for objecting to the repression of these objectionable practices. In fact, the Government quite logically set out to legalise the Trade Unions on condition of their acting up to the pious professions of Applegarth and his friends.

This, of course, did not suit the Unions. Indeed, it did not suit even the Amalgamated Societies, which had to fight on occasion, and had no wish to fight with both hands tied behind their backs. It became necessary to mobilise the whole force of the Unions to fight the new danger, and the Conference of Amalgamated Trades, seeing that the situation had passed beyond its control, surrendered its attempt to act as the sole manipulator of the parliamentary wires.

Hitherto, as we have seen, the Junta had looked with suspicion on the new Trades Union Congress. Odger and Howell did indeed attend the Birmingham Congress of 1869; but Odger refused to serve on the Parliamentary Committee which was then first appointed. Moreover, though the Congress decided to meet in London the following year, the London Trades Council took no steps to convene it, and actually no Congress was held in 1870. But now the Junta made up their minds to appeal to the wider movement. They decided to dissolve the Conference of Amalgamated Trades, and convened the Trades Union Congress which they had failed to call the year before. From this point the leaders of the Amalgamated Societies took their place on the Trades Union Congress Parliamentary Committee, which they at once began to

dominate. George Howell, their faithful follower, became Secretary, and held the post till 1875. The Parliamentary Committee became the recognised " Cabinet " of the Trade Union Movement.

The Government, despite strong pressure from the Trade Unions and their friends, stood firm, and refused to withdraw the penal provisions of the Trade Union Bill. Its spokesman, indeed, disclaimed all intention of altering the law, though the Bill proposed to repeal the Act of 1859 which, passed on the initiative of the National Association of United Trades for the Protection of Labour, had legalised peaceful picketing. But, even if this disclaimer had been sincere, it would have been cold comfort for the Trade Unions, which had been constantly in conflict with the penal provisions of the law as it stood.

At length, a concession was secured. The Government, without modifying its proposals, agreed to divide its Bill into two, and, leaving in the Trade Union Bill the provisions dealing with the status of the Unions, to include the penal proposals in a separate Bill, which was called the Criminal Law Amendment Bill. This, of course, enabled the friends of the Unions to vote for the one Bill and against the other, and so to avoid endangering the proposals which the Trade Unions wanted to see passed. But it also enabled the Unions, if both Bills were passed, to agitate for the repeal of the one without jeopardising the continuance of the other, or re-opening the question of the status of Trade Unionism under the civil law.

Despite the opposition of the Unions to the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, both Bills became law in 1871. Trade Unions had acquired a legal status, thanks to the Junta's efforts. But they had also suffered a dangerous stiffening up against them of the criminal law.

How dangerous this was speedily became apparent. At once criminal prosecutions under the new Act began. Men were convicted and imprisoned for all manner of trivial offences. In a case arising out of the Nine Hours Movement of the London engineers, a man was sentenced to imprisonment because he had urged workers not to enter into fresh contracts with their employers. This was stigmatised as " coercion," punishable under the Act of 1871. This particular sentence was never carried out; for on appeal the prosecutor failed to appear. But hard upon this

case came, at the end of 1872, the trial and conviction of the London Gas-stokers.

The industrial significance of the Gas-stokers' movement of 1872 is discussed in a later section. Here we are concerned only with its legal aspect. In the summer of 1872 the Gas-stokers at the Beckton Gasworks formed a Trade Union, and demanded a rise in wages and a reduction in working hours, which were often as many as eighty a week. The movement spread to other gas-works, and in the majority a reduction in hours was secured. But the employers retaliated by victimising the leaders of the movement. This the men resented. The Union decided in the Beckton case, when a leader named Dilley had been dismissed, to support him without a strike; but at Fulham, when the men expostulated against the dismissals there, the management locked them out. This led to a general strike, which involved breach of contract by the men. At once legal prosecution began. The Gas Light and Coke Company took out summonses in five hundred cases under the Master and Servant Act; and at once twenty-four men were sent to six weeks' hard labour, and one, the chairman of the Beckton men, to three months. But the company were not even content with this. It selected six of the leaders and prosecuted them for conspiracy under the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1871. They were sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment.

This vindictive sentence, for no crime other than concerted strike action—for the breach of contract had been dealt with by the earlier suit—roused the whole Trade Union world to a sense of its peril. A Gas-stokers' Defence Committee had already been formed, and this both demanded the reversal of the sentence, and called for the repeal of the Act under which it had been given. At length, after four months, the Government released the prisoners, remitting the remainder of their sentences; but it still firmly refused to take any action for the amendment of the law. Gladstone, questioned in Parliament, denied that there was any need for further legislation; and the Government rigidly maintained this attitude up to the very end of its term of office. It appeared that the Trade Union agitation had failed, and that the effect of the great campaign for legal status had been to render all strike action unlawful.

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CHAPTER VI

THE LABOUR LAWS (*continued*)
TRADE UNIONISM IN THE 'SEVENTIES

1. Labour Representation to 1874
2. The Labour Laws of 1875
3. The Nine Hours Movement—Joseph Arch
4. The Factory Acts—The Plimsoll Line

I

Labour Representation to 1874

The Reform Act of 1867 and the critical situation of the Trade Unions in relation to the law turned the attention of the working-class leaders to parliamentary action. There had, indeed, been working-class political action at a much earlier stage. In 1830, Henry Hunt was elected for Preston, a constituency with a big working-class electorate in the days of the unreformed Parliament. In 1832 William Cobbett was returned for Oldham; and he held the seat till his death in 1835. Feargus O'Connor won Nottingham as a Chartist in 1847; and both earlier and later many Chartists presented themselves as candidates, sometimes going to the poll, but more often retiring after getting in their share of propaganda. William Newton, of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, stood for Tower Hamlets in 1852, probably the first Trade Unionist to go to the poll; and Ernest Jones stood for Nottingham as a Chartist as late as 1857.

Thereafter came a pause. Chartism died out, and the new Reform societies contented themselves with agitation for an extended franchise, shorter Parliaments, and the ballot, and did not put forward candidates of their own. Apparently the first body to attempt the organisation of the workers as a political force after the fall of Chartism was the London Working Men's Association, which, as we have seen, was founded by George Potter and Robert Hartwell, the old Chartist, in 1866, partly as a rival to the London Trades Council.

It was in 1867, the year of the Reform Act, that the London Working Men's Association launched its movement for working-class representation in Parliament. The great legal struggle of the Trade Unions was just beginning; and from the first the L.W.M.A. appealed directly to the organised working-class movement. It did not confine its activity to London. It issued a manifesto to trade organisations throughout the country, urging the creation of

a Working Men's Parliamentary Election Fund, and calling upon Trade Unions, Trades Councils, and Co-operative Societies to take steps to organise in their own areas for the purpose of securing the return of working men to Parliament. The signatories to the manifesto were all Trade Unionists, and included, besides Potter and Hartwell, Henry Broadhurst of the Stonemasons, afterwards Secretary of the Trades Union Congress, and Joseph Leicester, of the Glass-makers' Society. In 1868 we find George Potter's paper, *The Beehive*, as the organ of the new movement, suggesting the general imposition of a Trade Union political levy.

The appeal of the L.W.M.A. seems to have produced little response. The Junta, then at the height of their quarrel with Potter, stood aloof, and a proposed National Convention of Trade Union Delegates to put the movement on a proper basis was never held. The General Election of 1868 came before there had been time to develop any proper organisation. Three Trade Union candidates—Howell for Aylesbury, W. R. Cremer for Warwick, and E. O. Greening, the Co-operator, for Halifax—did go to the poll; but none of these was associated with the L.W.M.A. Hartwell, indeed, put up for Stoke-on-Trent, but had to retire for lack of funds—a sure sign of the movement's weakness.

The appearance of Cremer and Howell as candidates shows, however, that the Junta was not opposed to working-class candidatures, and in the following year, seeing the need for working-class pressure in order to get their Trade Union Bill considered, they themselves took steps to organise the movement. At about the same time it appears that George Potter, hitherto their most formidable opponent, came to terms with them, or made his surrender to them. *The Beehive*, his influential journal, was, at the beginning of 1870, taken over by a company in which the Junta and their friends held the control, and Potter, retained as editor, had to submit to the association in the post of the Rev. Henry Solly, who in 1862, had founded the Working Men's Club and Institute Union. Already, at the Trades Union Congress of 1869, which, as we saw, endorsed the Junta's policy in connection with the Royal Commission, we find George Odger moving, and Potter seconding, a successful resolution in favour of Labour representation in Parliament. In the same year, we find Odger at Stafford and Potter at Nottingham retiring in

order not to split the Liberal vote. But this, as we shall see, was by no means inconsistent with the new attitude of the working-class leaders towards working-class representation.

The decision of the Junta to take up parliamentary action assumed shape in a new organisation. In 1869 the Labour Representation League was formed, practically as a successor to the National Reform League. Its objects were to secure the return of working men to Parliament, to promote the registration of working-class voters throughout the country "without reference to their opinions or party bias," and to recommend to the support of working-class electors candidates whose attitude on labour questions commended them to the movement. The League was based on individual membership, with a subscription of 1*s.* a year from working men and 10*s.* from those who had been working men but had "passed into other occupations." The President was R. M. Latham, a barrister; Allan, of the Engineers, was Treasurer; and Lloyd Jones, the old Owenite, was Secretary. The Executive included Applegarth, Coulson, Cremer, Guile, Howell, Odger and Shipton of the Junta group, as well as William Newton of the Engineers, Connolly of the Stonemasons, Holyoake and George Potter. Charles Bradlaugh was nominated, but he withdrew because he objected to the absence of any statement of political principles from the declarations of the League.

It will be seen that the L.R.L. was so far a London movement, and did not include the Northern leaders. Its early candidatures were all in the South of England. In 1870 Odger fought in a three-cornered by-election at Southwark. The Liberal withdrew in favour of Odger towards the close of the poll, but too late to prevent a Conservative victory. Later in the same year Odger was nominated for Bristol, but withdrew in the Liberal's favour. Howell did the same thing at Norwich in 1871.

In these early by-elections, the League's object was to secure the adoption of its candidate by the Liberal Party in the constituency. The working-class candidates desired to run as Liberals, and, if elected, to sit as members of the Liberal Party. Many Liberals, including John Stuart Mill, had expressed the desire to see some working men in Parliament to put the working-class point of view, and the League's ambitions did not go beyond this. Indeed, one of its principal aims was, not so much the return of working men,

as the influencing of Liberals to support working-class claims in the House for fear of the new working-class vote. Many of them did not even go so far as Mill, when he wrote to Odger that " the working men's policy is to insist on their own representatives and, in default of success, to permit Tories to be sent into the House until the Whig majority is seriously reduced when, of course, the Whigs will be happy to compromise and allow a few working-men representatives in the House."

Gradually, however, the persistent refusal of the Government to repeal or amend the Criminal Law Amendment Act drove the Trade Union leaders to this point, and at the General Election of 1874, the working-class vote was undoubtedly responsible to some extent for the defeat of the Liberal Government and the return of the Conservatives to power. On this occasion, when the Labour Representation League first tested its strength, not only did a number of working-class candidates go to the poll against Liberals, but a large part of the working-class vote was cast for Tories against the more reactionary of the Liberal candidates. In about half a dozen constituencies, moreover, the Conservatives nominated either no candidate, or only one for two seats, thus leaving the Labour man a free run against the Liberal.

In all, fifteen working-class candidates went to the poll at this election, including Odger, Potter, Howell, Burt, Macdonald, Broadhurst, Cremer, Halliday and Pickard of the Amalgamated Miners, Lucraft and John Kane. Both Miners' Unions were active in the fight, the National, after an address from Lloyd Jones, having thrown in its lot with the movement for Labour representation in the previous year. Of the fifteen candidates, two were successful—both miners. Thomas Burt was elected for Morpeth and Alexander Macdonald for Stafford—in both cases without Liberal opposition. These two became the first Labour Members; but both were returned by a combined Liberal-Labour vote, and ranked as Liberals in the House of Commons. At the election of 1880, one more member, Henry Broadhurst, the Secretary of the L.R.L., was added; and he too sat as a Liberal. Thereafter, the Labour Representation League perished.

Before 1874, the L.R.L. had tried its hand at local elections. It created a special body, the Working Men's School Board Central Committee—to fight the elections for the new School Boards set

up under the Education Act of 1870, and secured Benjamin Lucraft's election for Finsbury. This was the small beginning of the movement for working-class representation in the sphere of Local Government. But no considerable development followed till after the reform of Local Government in 1888.

Meanwhile, at the Trades Union Congress, the question of Labour representation was a matter of annual debate. With little opposition, resolutions in its favour were carried year after year. At the Congress of 1873 the Parliamentary Committee was instructed, where it was asked to act by the local trade associations, to take steps to help in running Trade Union candidates; but no steps appear to have been taken, though in that year the Federation of Associated Employers of Labour had been formed, chiefly on the initiative of the Engineering and Shipbuilding Employers' Association, for the express purpose of combating the political pretensions of the Unions and preventing the repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. Thereafter, the annual pious resolutions were resumed; but there was no further development until the 'eighties.

The movement for working-class representation described in this section had clearly neither the intention nor the desire to form a separate working-class party. This aim was, indeed, probably in the minds of some of the leaders of the London Working Men's Association in 1867, and may have been the principal cause of their failure. But, as soon as the movement was taken over by the Junta and their friends, any such idea was dropped. In the first instance, the Junta was chiefly using the movement for the purpose of increasing the pressure for amendment of the Labour Laws; and, when it had served this immediate purpose, it became for them merely an auxiliary of the Liberal Party, whose general political faith they increasingly shared. For a while, the Trade Unionists had fallen out with the leaders of the Liberal Party over the Labour Laws. But, when that question had been satisfactorily settled by the Conservatives in the manner shortly to be described, they returned to the Liberal fold, and the movement for Labour representation ceased, for a time, to play an independent part in working-class development. The true "Lib-Lab" era began in 1875.

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II

The Labour Laws of 1875

In 1874 the Liberal Government fell, and the Conservatives came to power. For the Trade Unions, the great question was how this change would affect their demand for the repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act. The Liberals had refused all amendment, and the working-class voters had turned against them. But were the Conservatives likely to do better? It was true that the Conservatives had passed the Reform Act of 1867, and given the workers the vote. But the workers had requited them by voting Liberal in 1868. What would Disraeli do now? The Trade Union leaders had their doubts, and meant to apply all the pressure they could.

The Government's first step was the appointment of a Royal Commission to enquire into the entire operation of the Labour Laws. At once the Trade Unionists raised a howl of protest; for this seemed to re-open the whole question, and to put the Trade Union Act of 1871 in jeopardy. Thomas Burt, after consultation with Howell and Frederic Harrison, refused to sit on the Commission. The Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress passed a resolution of protest against its formation, and called for immediate legislation. Nevertheless, Alexander Macdonald and Thomas Hughes were at length persuaded to accept seats; but, though Macdonald was the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee, that body persisted in recommending the whole Trade Union Movement to boycott the Commission. In these circumstances the Commissioners set to work.

Before long the Trade Unions had further cause for alarm. The Government brought forward a comprehensive Bill amending the law relating to Friendly Societies. It was found that the draft proposed to repeal the Trade Union Act of 1871, and to bring Trade Unions under the new Act. At once there was a storm of protest, and finally the proposal was dropped, only minor technical

amendments of the Trade Union Act being included in the Friendly Societies Act of 1875. Meanwhile, the Royal Commission was taking evidence; but only a very few Trade Unionists, including George Shipton, the Painters' Secretary, defied the wish of the Parliamentary Committee, and appeared to give evidence. The report, published early in 1875, and signed by all the members (including Hughes) except Macdonald, who presented a minority report, was thoroughly unsatisfactory to the Unions. Only minor amendments to the Criminal Law Amendment Act and a slight modification of the law of conspiracy were proposed. The repeal of the penal clauses of the Master and Servant Act was, indeed, also proposed; but otherwise the Act was left as it stood. Macdonald, in his report, stood for the full Trade Union claim, including the complete repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act.

Trade Union feeling was now thoroughly aroused, and a great agitation began. This apparently caused the Government to change its mind; for when, in June 1875, they produced their Bills, it was seen that the Trade Union claims had been substantially met. The Bills were two, in addition to the Friendly Societies Bill.

The Master and Servant Act of 1867 was replaced by the Employers and Workmen Act, 1875—a change of name which signified also a vital change of substance. Imprisonment for breach of contract was abolished, save in the special cases of certain vital public services or of danger to life or valuable property. The contract of employment was made, like other contracts, a purely civil engagement, into which employer and worker entered as legally equal parties.

The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1871 was completely repealed, and replaced by a new measure, the Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, 1875. By this Act, peaceful picketing was legalised, and it was laid down that no act should be punishable if done in combination unless it would be criminal if done by an individual acting alone. The dangerous phrases about "molestation," "obstruction," and "coercion," were swept away, and cases of intimidation or violence were left to be dealt with by the general body of law. In other words, the Trade Unions secured a charter which appeared, until the Taff Vale decision of 1901, to give them adequate legal status and immunity in the conduct of industrial disputes. The Trade Union (Amendment) Act of 1876, which

made only minor administrative amendments in the Act of 1871 (though its defining clause afterwards acquired a sinister significance in the Osborne Judgment of 1907), completes the tale of the Labour Laws of the 'seventies.

This astonishingly complete victory was yielded by a Conservative Government, busily engaged in wooing the new working-class electorate. But the working-class electors were not grateful. Having got their emancipation from the Conservatives, they became more tied to the Liberal apron-strings than ever.

BOOKS

See Chapter V., section 3.

III

The Nine Hours Movement—Joseph Arch

The period between 1867 and 1875, during which the Trade Unions were pursuing their long struggle for legal recognition of their rights, and making their first considerable experiment in collective political action, was also a time of acute and widespread industrial unrest. Between 1867 and 1874 numbers were flocking into the Unions, and new Unions were constantly being formed. We have already watched this growth in the case of the miners, whose organisations reached their greatest development during these years. We have now to survey it, not in relation to one particular industry, but as it affected the movement as a whole.

After the financial crisis of 1866 came two years of bad trade, during which the Unions were chiefly struggling to resist reductions in wages. To this time belongs the great lock-out of 1867 in the Clyde shipyards. In the previous year the employers had formed a powerful organisation of their own—the Clyde Shipbuilders' and Engineers' Association—to fight the Unions. In 1867 they locked the men out, and presented the "document" demanding renunciation of Trade Union membership, and after a six months' struggle the Unions were beaten. This was in the first year's life of the Alliance of Organised Trades, to whose work reference has been made already; and the Clyde lock-out was the severest strain on its undeveloped resources.

But in 1869 the situation changed, and a great revival of trade began. From 1870 to 1873 was a period of great prosperity, followed by a gradual falling off from 1874 onwards. In these years of booming trade the great development of Trade Unionism took place.

It began, in 1869 and 1870, with a revival in the building trades. In these years there were many local building strikes, and in London the Nine Hours Movement was revived, though without immediate result. In most of the provincial centres, these strikes

were successful both in increasing wages and in reducing hours, and they certainly played an important part in stimulating activity in other industries. The success of the builders seems to have been a direct cause of the great Nine Hours Movement of the engineers in 1871.

The form of this successful strike movement among the engineering workers is as notable as its result. It owed less than nothing to the central leadership of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, which, under William Allan's canny guidance, had become far too cautious to embark upon any big forward movement. Allan was far more intent on conserving his Union's funds and developing its activities as a friendly society than in fighting for either higher wages or shorter hours. The movement began under purely local auspices, with a strike at Sunderland early in 1871, in which the men demanded, and after four weeks' stoppage won, the nine hours' day.

The employers on the North-East Coast, anticipating an extension of the struggle, at once organised in readiness for it. The men, on their side, were for the most part not organised at all, the Engineers, the Boilermakers, and the other Unions concerned having only a fraction even of the skilled workers in their ranks. But at once an organisation was improvised, the local Union leaders creating the Nine Hours League as a temporary body in which Unionists and non-Unionists alike were enrolled. John Burnett, a young and active local member of the A.S.E., became President of the new body, and the recognised leader of the strike. As in previous great conflicts, appeals were made to the whole working-class movement to help with contributions to the funds, and for five months the League successfully kept up the struggle. The employers, on their side, levied themselves throughout the country for the support of the firms which were held up. Attempts were made to introduce blacklegs from abroad; but these were for the most part successfully countered by the efforts of the International Working Men's Association, which sent Cohn, its Danish Corresponding Secretary in London, to the Continent to stop the blacklegs from coming. Finally, the employers were compelled to give way, and the fifty-four hours' week was generally recognised throughout the engineering shops and shipyards in the North-East.

The effect of this victory was speedily seen. Throughout the

country, engineers and builders, as well as many workers in other trades, put forward demands for shorter hours. The Durham coalowners agreed to recognise the Durham Miners' Association, and to abolish the yearly bond. The South Wales Miners struck, and won a victory. Almost alone in failure were the Oldham Spinners, who struck in vain for the Saturday half-holiday. But their failure was due largely to the absence of a concerted movement throughout the cotton districts. Throughout 1872 and 1873 the strikes continued, especially in the engineering trades. In 1872 the Clyde engineers retrieved their failure of 1867 by winning the fifty-one hours' week. In London, many of the building workers struck in 1872 for the nine hours' day and a rise in wages, and the employers replied with a general lock-out. The movement was in the hands of an Amalgamated Building Trades Committee; but the Stonemasons finally made a separate settlement on the basis of a compromise, and the other trades, accusing them of betraying the cause, were compelled to resume work. It was in connection with this dispute that Patrick Kenney, afterwards a renegade from the Labour Movement, formed his General Amalgamated Labourers' Union, which collapsed in the subsequent depression, and that George Shipton succeeded in getting a number of the Painters' Societies to join forces in an Amalgamated Society on the approved lines. London had only a partial success; but in many areas the fifty-four hours' week was conceded without a strike.

The Nine Hours Movement had a further effect. It seemed to show that victories could be won without the expensive and difficult organisation of "Amalgamated Societies." It opened up the hopes of victory to others besides the skilled craftsmen, and set the less skilled workers thinking of the possible benefits to themselves of Trade Union organisation. The Gas-stokers' Union of 1872, which has been described already, was only one of a large number of new Unions of less skilled workers which sprang into existence during these stimulating years. The railway workers, hitherto practically unorganised, formed the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants in 1872, with financial aid from Michael Bass, the Liberal brewer. Mrs. Emma Paterson began to organise Unions for the women workers, and formed in 1874 the Women's Protective and Provident League, which later became the Women's Trade Union League. And, most notable of all,

came the uprising of the agricultural workers who, since their complete suppression in the 'thirties, had seemed incapable of any considerable movement of organisation.

There had, indeed, been one or two scattered agricultural strikes in the 'sixties; but these had been easily crushed. Suddenly, in 1871, the labourers began to stir. An agricultural workers' Union was formed in Herefordshire in that year, and soon enrolled 30,000 members. But the great impetus came from Warwickshire, where in 1872 Joseph Arch, himself a labourer and a Methodist preacher, organised in 1872 the Warwickshire Labourers' Union, in the course of a successful local strike for higher wages and a shorter working-day. The movement spread with extraordinary rapidity south, east and west. Within a few months the Warwickshire Union became the National Agricultural Labourers' Union, and, a few months later, the membership rose to 100,000. In addition, many local Unions sprang up, and, refusing to merge themselves in the "National," formed a loosely-knit Federal Union of Agricultural and General Labourers, with a further membership of about 50,000. Kent, too, had a powerful Union of its own, and this subsequently spread to Sussex.

Wherever branches of any of these Unions were organised, demands for higher wages and reduced hours at once followed. In some cases—indeed, wherever they dared—the farmers met the agitation by victimising the leaders, and the country gentlefolk and the parsons took a strong line against it. But the labourers were for the moment strong enough, and strongly enough supported, to bring about an almost general rise in wages and a widespread reduction in working hours. The industrial Trade Unions, and many middle-class sympathisers, gave them valuable help in money and organising effort. It seemed as if the countryside was rising at last.

Before long, however, the farmers and the gentry recovered from the effects of their first surprise. Victimisation became more widespread. At Chipping Norton, two clergymen magistrates sent sixteen labourers' wives to prison for the crime of intimidating blacklegs during a dispute. And, in 1874, the lock-out was extensively employed to break the power of the Unions. Some of the Suffolk labourers demanded a rise of wages from 13*s.* to 14*s.* for a week of fifty-four hours. The farmers replied with a general

lock-out throughout the county, and this rapidly spread to other areas, till the whole of the Eastern Counties and Midlands were involved. The Unions were unable to stand up against this onslaught, and thousands of men were forced to renounce their membership in order to get work.

This was the first great set-back. It was followed by the great depression in British agriculture—the long-deferred consequence of the repeal of the Corn Laws thirty years before. As the general industrial depression developed in the late 'seventies, there came a heavy fall in prices, and foreign corn began to stream in at prices with which the British farmer could not compete. Wholesale conversion of land from arable to pasture greatly reduced the demand for agricultural labour; and the efforts of the Unions to meet the situation by aiding members to emigrate were ridiculously inadequate to meet the shortage of demand. Trade Union membership among the labourers rapidly dwindled. Many of the Unions disappeared altogether. By 1881 Arch's National Union had shrunk to a membership of 15,000. Such other Unions as survived at all abandoned their protective activities, and became practically Friendly Societies of no industrial importance. Only in Norfolk did the National Union retain any vitality. There it was still strong enough to help Joseph Arch to win his way to Parliament in 1885, when the agricultural workers had at length been given the vote by the Reform Act of 1884.

While it lasted, however, the labourers' movement was a portent. For a few years, there seemed to be growing up a Trade Union Movement wide enough to embrace the entire working class of town and country alike. The narrowness and sectionalism of the " Amalgamated Societies " seemed in process of eclipse by a larger ideal of working-class unity. Old ideas, prevalent in the great movement of the 'thirties, began to revive. The workers dreamed again of the control of industry, and began again to experiment in self-governing workshops and factories under Trade Union control. The Yorkshire and Durham Miners' Associations both acquired collieries; the North-East Coast engineers started the Ouseburn Engineering Works; the Hosiery Workers' Union acquired a factory of its own. One Trade Union after another embarked on schemes of Co-operative Production. Lloyd Jones, the old Owenite, now Secretary of the Labour Representation League, was especially

active in advocating these developments; and even the cautious Alexander Macdonald, probably influenced by his Owenite friend, Campbell of the Glasgow Trades Council, urged them upon the miners.

This temporary revival of Co-operative production was accompanied by a great expansion of the consumers' Co-operative Movement. We have seen how the Scottish Co-operative Wholesale Society began business in 1868, and in 1873 the North of England Co-operative Wholesale Society became simply the C.W.S., began to cover the entire country, and opened its first productive works for the manufacture of biscuits and boots. Thereafter, its development was rapid, and fresh productive enterprises were soon added. Meanwhile, the consumers' movement as a whole was moving towards more effective national organisation. In 1869 the Central Co-operative Conference Board was established and the modern series of fully representative Annual Co-operative Congresses began. A few years later the Board became the Co-operative Union, the recognised central body for the movement as a whole, to which practically all the Societies, including the Wholesales and the producers' societies, became affiliated. The control of the movement, however, remained wholly decentralised, each local Society retaining its full independence. The Industrial and Provident Societies Act of 1876 gave increased legal powers, and brought banking, at which the C.W.S. had already made a tentative beginning in 1872, fully within the competence of the movement.

Consumers' Co-operation pursued its successful career, little affected by the ups and downs of trade. But the great Trade Union revival of the early 'seventies did not last. All its schemes, hopes and organisations perished in the great depression. From 1875 onwards trade grew steadily worse. The Co-operative mines and factories had to close down; the new Unions lost their members, and had in many cases to dissolve; to the period of hope and confidence succeeded apathy and despair. The great miners' organisations broke down, and almost disappeared. Only the Amalgamated Societies were able to stand up against the troubles of the late 'seventies; and they withstood the storm only by an almost entire abandonment of industrial activity. But the story of this collapse, and of the subsequent revival, belongs to a later

chapter. Here we need only note that, but for the depression of the later 'seventies, the great movement which, ten years later, was to create the " New Unionism " and express itself in the Dock Strike of 1889, would have proceeded without a break from the uprising described in this chapter. Between 1867 and 1875 the " bottom dog " made his voice heard; the great depression of the late 'seventies for a decade firmly silenced him. But then he rose again.

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IV

The Factory Acts—The Plimsoll Line

While the agricultural workers were endeavouring to improve their position by organisation, the miners and textile operatives were agitating for further protection from the law. In 1872, as we have seen, the miners secured the passing of the Coal and Metalliferous Mines Acts. In Lancashire the failure of the Oldham Spinners' strike caused the Spinners' and Weavers' Unions to come together in a new "Short Time" movement. In 1872 they formed the Factory Acts Reform Association, and Short Time Committees were once more set up throughout the textile districts. The Factory Acts had been extended in 1867 to apply to new trades, and workshops had then for the first time been brought generally under regulation; but the permitted hours had been left as in the Act of 1850, that is, at sixty a week. The aim of the Unions was now to secure by law a maximum working week of fifty-four hours —that is, a working day of nine and a half hours, with a half-holiday on Saturday. In response to this pressure, Commissions were sent by the Government to investigate conditions in the textile districts; and their report, issued in 1873, endorsed the demand for the fifty-four hour week. In the same year A. J. Mundella, acting as usual in close association with the moderate Trade Union leaders, introduced the Factory (Health of Women) Bill into the House of Commons. At once a storm arose. Many Liberals opposed the Bill on *laissez-faire* principles; and this contributed to the defeat of the Liberal Government at the Election of 1874. The Tories, on their return to power, passed an Act which, after a year's grace, raised the minimum age of textile factory employment to ten; but they refused to concede the fifty-four hours week. A week of fifty-seven hours was, however, secured.

On this, the agitation was redoubled, and in 1876 the Government was induced to set up a Commission to go into the Factory Acts as a whole. Before this body a quarrel, already foreshadowed

in the opposition to the Act of 1874, developed a good deal further. The Trade Unions, as usual, put forward their demand for shorter hours for all workers in the industries concerned in the form of a demand for legislative protection for women and children. They knew well enough that, if women and children had their working day shortened by law, the men would share in the benefit, because the factories could not be kept open for them alone. But they had now for the first time to deal with the developing Feminist Movement, whose leaders objected to any special regulation of women's conditions as prejudicing their chances of employment, and as manœuvres of the men to drive the women out of industry. The new women's Trade Unions, under Mrs. Paterson's guidance, opposed the claims of the Factory Acts Reform Association, and many *laissez-faire* Liberals, headed by Professor Fawcett, whose wife was a leader in the women's movement, were eager to snatch at this excuse for opposition.

The result was that, while the Act of 1878 achieved an important consolidation of the law, and greatly improved its administration, no further reduction of working hours was secured, and the textile workers were driven back upon their own resources. In the same year came the great cotton strike, which brought the workers' forward movement to an end. Depression of trade had set in by 1877, and the employers had begun to enforce local reductions in wages, which led to more than one strike. But in 1878 trade became much worse, and the employers in all districts demanded a wage reduction of ten per cent. The Unions replied that the trouble was due to over-production, and demanded that output should be restricted by running the mills only four days a week. This the employers rejected as interference with the freedom of industry and with their management of their own businesses. The result was a great ten weeks' stoppage, accompanied by some disorders, in which the house of the employers' chairman was sacked and burnt down. Finally, the men were driven back to work on the employers' terms. Their defeat brought the hours' movement for the time to an end.

At the same time as the cotton operatives launched their movement for factory reform, Samuel Plimsoll began his agitation on behalf of the seamen. In 1871, Plimsoll approached the Trades Union Congress for help in his campaign for a new Merchant

Shipping Act, and at the Congress of 1873 he distributed copies of his book, *Our Seamen*, and definitely inaugurated his agitation. *Our Seamen* was a description, eloquent and heavily documented, of the scandalous conditions under which the men of the mercantile marine had to work, of the unnecessary hardships and hazards to which they were exposed, of " coffin ships " and murdering shipowners. Names and instances were freely given, and abundant opportunity for libel actions was intentionally afforded.

The Trade Unions took up the Plimsoll agitation with great energy. The Liverpool Trades Council played a leading part, but Unions of all sorts helped. The Yorkshire Miners levied their members a shilling each, and sent over £1,000 to help the campaign. The Engineers and the Amalgamated Miners each sent a similar sum. A Plimsoll and Seamen's Fund Committee was formed, with leading Trade Unionists upon it, and George Howell became its secretary. Lord Shaftesbury was chairman. Meetings were held all over the country in support of Mr. Plimsoll's Bill.

Very soon the Government began to give way, despite the strong opposition of shipowners on both sides of the House. In 1873 a temporary Act was passed, under which over four hundred vessels were detained as unseaworthy during the first year. The Plimsoll agitation played its part in the Election of 1874, and in the following year the new Conservative Government introduced a Bill, which became law in the following year as the Merchant Shipping Act of 1876.

These two agitations give some idea of the social ferment of the early 'seventies, by far the most active period for social legislation of the entire nineteenth century. Within seven years, besides the Mines Acts of 1872, the Factory Act of 1875 and the Merchant Shipping Act of 1876, there were passed the Education Acts of 1870 and 1876, which first set up a general system of elementary education throughout the country. The Judicature Act of 1873 reformed the legal system. The Public Health Acts of 1872 and 1875 effectively inaugurated the modern era in Local Government. The Cross Housing Act of 1876 gave the first clear recognition of the public responsibility for housing conditions in the towns. In addition, the Civil Service was reformed in 1870, and put on its modern basis of open examination; and, in 1873, the growth of the demand for adult education was signalised by the beginning of the

University Extension Movement. The Building Societies Act of 1874, the Friendly Societies Act of 1875, and the Industrial and Provident Societies Act of 1876, gave to Friendly and Co-operative Societies the same sort of legal charters as the Labour Laws of 1871 to 1875 conferred upon the Trade Unions. Never was there such activity in legislation—not even in the years immediately following the Reform Act of 1832. And the most active period was in the first three years of the Conservative Government of 1874.

But these social developments were destined to an abrupt check. The movement for social reform shared the fate of the expanding Trade Union Movement. The depression of the late 'seventies suddenly cut it short. To that great reverse and to its causes we must now turn our attention.

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CHAPTER VII. THE GREAT DEPRESSION

1. The Coming of Imperialism
2. Conciliation and Arbitration—The "Lib-Labs"

I

The Coming of Imperialism

In the late 'seventies the long period of trade prosperity came to an end. British exports, which had amounted to £256,000,000 in 1872, fell gradually to £192,000,000 in 1879. Unemployment, measured by Trade Union returns, rose from 1 per cent. to nearly 12. 1878 was a bad year; 1879 was infinitely worse. Then came a partial recovery. 1880 was bad, but improving: 1881 and 1882 were fairly good. In 1882 exports rose again to £241,000,000, and unemployment fell below 3 per cent. But there followed a new and more prolonged slump, which lasted till 1888. The worst years were 1885 and 1886, when exports fell to £213,000,000, and unemployment rose to 10 per cent. Then at last came the boom of 1889 and 1890, followed by the relatively stable conditions of the following decade.

The great depression, as we have seen, swept away the movement for social reform, and brought the rapid advance of the Trade Unions abruptly to an end. The great Unions of agricultural workers shrunk almost to nothing. Macdonald's National Miners' Union broke up. The cotton operatives, the builders and the engineers were all defeated in great strikes against heavy reduction in wages. The Trade Union Co-operative factories went bankrupt; even the consumers' Co-operative Movement suffered a check. And the Trade Unions which survived were placed rigidly on the defensive, and confined their activities as far as possible to the administration of friendly benefits and the promotion of schemes of conciliation. Sliding Scales, under which wages were made to depend on the selling price of the product, became prevalent at a time when prices were steadily and sharply falling.

What were the causes of this great depression? Above all, it was the logical outcome of the previous period of prosperity. For a generation, Great Britain had abundantly prospered by supplying

the world with products of which she had, by virtue of her mastery of technique, her machine equipment, her coal, her command of the iron trades, the skill of her operatives, and her abundant supply of surplus capital available for investment, a virtual monopoly. She could produce more cheaply than any rival, and yet make a larger profit. The advance in the workers' standard of life between 1850 and 1875 represented but a small share in the wealth which had flowed into Great Britain from every quarter of the globe in a rich and unending stream.

By the middle 'seventies the situation was rapidly changing. Rival producers were beginning to threaten seriously the dominance of British industry. The United States began increasingly to supply its own needs, behind a tariff wall which effectively kept out many classes of British goods. For wheat, and growingly for meat as well, Great Britain looked more and more to the United States; but, while our imports from America grew, our exports ceased to grow. Germany, too, was becoming a powerful rival, especially in the metal industries, and was also changing over to a protective system which damaged the British export trades. Most of Britain's best customers were beginning in some measure to produce for themselves with the aid of the new technique of which Britain had been the pioneer.

There were, moreover, internal causes for the depression. The great period of intensive railway building, which had provided a profitable outlet for British capital in every part of the world, was drawing to an end; and the substitution of steel for iron, by lengthening the life of rails and other equipment, was diminishing the need for renewals. In the shipping industry, the opening of the Suez Canal, the increase in the speed and carrying capacity of vessels, and the substitution of steel for iron in shipbuilding, created an oversupply of tonnage, and caused intensive competition for cargoes. And, above all, a series of great inventions in the metal trades—the Bessemer process of 1856, the Siemens process of 1866, and the discoveries of Gilchrist and Thomas in the 'seventies—had revolutionised the processes of iron and steel manufacture.

These inventions compelled Great Britain, the possessor of by far the largest and best equipped iron industry in the world, to reconstruct her entire methods of production, and to scrap a huge

capital which had been sunk in the old processes. They involved also a big importation of iron ore, and an eclipse of British iron mining; for most British iron ores, containing phosphorus, were unsuitable for the new methods of manufacture devised by Bessemer and Siemens. The great depression was greatest of all in the constructional trades, which were hit at once by the growth of foreign competition based from the first on the new methods, the decline in demand owing to the slackening of railway construction and the use of steel, and the need for almost complete capital re-equipment of the British works.

At the same time, while other countries were building up tariffs against Great Britain, the Free Trade system was for the first time beginning to operate effectively in relation to British imports. The real effects of repealing the Corn Laws were not seen until America had been opened up, and improved facilities for transport by land and sea brought cheap food to our ports. Prices indeed fell, and before long counteracted in large measure the effect of lower wages for the town workers. But British agriculture was hard hit, and the depopulation of the countryside, begun in the generation between 1850 and 1880, was immensely speeded up in the following decade.

Great Britain, in fact, had lost her world monopoly. She remained by far the wealthiest country in the world; for the large capital export of the past generation continued to bring in a heavy annual tribute of interest from the rest of the world. Capital continued to accumulate; for much of this interest was reinvested abroad, and the richer classes continued to apply their surplus incomes largely to foreign investment. But this could no longer be relied upon to create the same steady stream of orders as before; for even where Great Britain continued to supply the capital, it no longer followed as a matter of course that she would receive the resulting orders for goods.

The 'eighties echoed with complaints at the prostration of trade, and lamentations at the passing of Great Britain's world monopoly. The Reports of the Royal Commission on the Depression of Trade, appointed in 1886, are full of them. With the great depression the illusion of an endless, effortless, automatic progress in wealth and trade—so dear to the Victorians—was shattered, and the air began to be thick with prophecies of ruin and incitements to action.

A great change came over British commercial and economic policy. The doctrine of commercial *laissez-faire*, which had been practically unchallenged for a generation, was now energetically challenged. Tariff Reform began to be heard of as an economic heresy claiming adherents among business men.

Nowhere was the change in policy more evident than in the British attitude towards the Empire. In the " golden age " the popular attitude was that of bored expectancy of dissolution. Men like Bright and Cobden were only waiting for the Colonies to drop off like ripe fruit from the tree. Colonial self-government was regarded as a preliminary to entire independence. The non-self-governing parts of the Empire were treated, for the most part, as a troublesome responsibility. India, indeed, was always to some extent an exception to this rule; for the Indian market was of great importance; but, generally, this was the prevailing attitude. All the world seemed an open market for British wares. Why should Great Britain give herself the trouble of governing it?

In the 'seventies, and especially as the depression grew, this attitude changed. In the 'eighties an opposite attitude became clearly dominant. The Colonies came to be regarded as potentially great markets for British exports, but as markets needing conscious and scientific development. The idea spread of peopling Canada and Australia with the unemployed surplus population of Great Britain, and thus of both relieving the congestion at home and settling abroad fresh customers for British trade. The Colonial Conference at the Jubilee of 1887 gave clear expression to the new policy.

Economic Imperialism, however, did not develop in Great Britain alone, or apply only to lands already within the Empire. Germany and France, followed later by other countries, began to build up overseas Empires of their own in rivalry to Great Britain. From 1880 a new partition of the unexploited places of the world began. Africa was rapidly shared out between the European Powers; and the Far East became the sphere of new economic rivalries. Each country sought, not only for markets in which to sell goods, but for concessions for railway building and the exploitation of natural resources and cheap native labour, for sources of valuable raw materials of industry, for every kind of new sphere of influence and of imperial power.

It was in this new world of intense economic rivalries that British Labour entered on a fresh phase of development, and that modern Socialism began to grow. Till the great depression came, the British workers had shared in the illusions of their masters. They too had thought that every year, with only a small set-back here and there, Britain was destined to grow richer and richer. They had believed that more and more crumbs would fall to them, almost automatically, from the rich man's table. They had therefore, on the whole, tried to work with the grain of Capitalism rather than against it. Only the unwillingness of the employers to work with them had prevented the growth of a general spirit of harmony between Capital and Labour. But, when they saw the monopoly of their masters threatened, and began to experience in falling wages and unemployment the results of the set-back to British industry, a section of them became growingly inclined to question the basis of the entire system. The nearly-forgotten doctrines of Karl Marx were revived, and found followers. Socialism, a British export in the eighteen thirties, was re-imported from Europe by Hyndman and the leaders of the Social Democratic Federation.

Naturally, however, the older leaders of the British movement were too old to change. In the 'eighties and 'nineties a great war was waged between the New Unionism and the Old, which was itself the New Unionism of 1850 grown servile, and in politics between the " Lib-Labs " and the Socialists, advocates of purely independent working-class political action. Neither completely won the day—out of their conflict emerged a new working-class movement which followed neither Broadhurst and his friends of the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress nor Hyndman nor even Keir Hardie and the Independent Labour Party. The New Unionism and the old blended and intermingled; and out of the political struggle rose the Labour Representation Committee, hovering uncertainly on the fringe of Socialism, but casting many a longing glance back at the old Liberal love with which it was still disposed to maintain a clandestine *liaison*.

The remainder of this book deals with this conflict and with its immediate results. But for the moment we must pause, on the threshold of the new, to watch the slow decline of movements that have spent their force.

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II

Conciliation and Arbitration—The "Lib-Labs"

We have seen how, in the great struggle of the Trade Unions for legal recognition, the leaders of the Amalgamated Societies successfully established their ascendency over the entire movement. Applegarth, indeed, retired from the Secretaryship of the Carpenters and Joiners in 1871, as the result of a quarrel, and Allan, of the Engineers, died in 1874. But the men who succeeded to the leadership, Burnett, of the Engineers, J. D. Prior, of the Carpenters, and Henry Broadhurst, of the Stonemasons, carried on the tradition of the Junta. Throughout, they stood for a policy of conciliation, deplored the use of the strike save as a final and rare resort, and aimed at building up Joint Boards for friendly negotiation with the associated employers.

Until 1871, they had an uphill task. A few formal Conciliation Boards had, indeed, been started in the early 'sixties—the Nottingham Hosiery Board by A. J. Mundella in 1864, and the Wolverhampton Building Trades Joint Committee by Sir Rupert Kettle four years later. But most employers were at this stage far more intent on smashing Trade Unions than on negotiating with them. The vindictiveness of the anti-Trade Union campaign which followed the Sheffield outrages shows the strength of the prevalent feeling.

After 1871 this feeling underwent a rapid change. The law had given the Trade Unions a definite status, and Applegarth and his friends had demonstrated before the Royal Commission that many Trade Unions were, after all, very mild and inoffensive bodies, which it might be better to recognise than to destroy. The Conciliation Act of 1867, for which the National Association of United Trades had worked so long, had been abortive, both because the employers were not ready for it and because it was framed on the wrong lines. But a few years later conciliation was spreading rapidly in many trades.

Among the pioneers of the new system were the ironworkers. The North of England Manufactured Iron Board was established at Darlington in 1869, and soon adopted the method of regulating wages by means of a sliding scale based on the selling price of the product. From Durham the system spread rapidly to other districts, until practically the whole industry was governed by a system of conciliation boards and sliding scales. We have seen how, by 1871, the coalowners in both Northumberland and Durham had recognised the Miners' Associations, and entered into formal arrangements for negotiation. By 1875 Yorkshire had done the same, and Alexander Macdonald was rejoicing over " the glorious state of things " and the " perfect confidence " felt by the miners in the new machinery. To have secured recognition from the employers seemed a glorious victory. Conciliation and Arbitration appeared as the realisation of the Union leaders' dreams.

The result of recognition was a rapid spread of the sliding scale to the coal industry. Between 1874 and 1880 sliding scales were adopted in South Staffordshire, South Wales, Somerset, Cannock Chase, Durham, Cumberland, Northumberland, West Yorkshire and North Wales. It should be noted, however, that this system, of which the miners in the North-East were the pioneers, was opposed by Macdonald, and did not extend to Scotland (save in Lanarkshire from 1887 to 1889), while in South Wales it was first imposed by the owners as the outcome of the men's defeat in the strike of 1875, and even in Durham it was at first accompanied by great friction. It was established there in 1877; but in 1879 the men struck against the reductions imposed, and in 1884 terminated the scale, and were only with difficulty persuaded to renew it. Gradually, however, most of the coalfields passed under the sliding scale system, which, after the collapse of Macdonald's National Union in 1879, ruled practically unchallenged till the coming of the new Miners' Federation a decade later.

The sliding scale system could not readily be applied to the great majority of industries. But the growth of conciliation extended over a much wider field. The Arbitration Act of 1872, promoted by the Parliamentary Committee of the Trades Union Congress, and providing for voluntary arbitration by consent of both parties, remained a dead letter; but trade after trade designed its own machinery. The cotton operatives, after the great strikes

of 1877 and 1878, settled down to make the best of the bad times by perfecting their methods of negotiation; joint committees were created in the engineering trades, after a great outburst of strikes and lock-outs in 1879; the boot and shoe operatives set up a Conciliation Board. In London, the Chamber of Commerce established a General Conciliation Board to promote the friendly settlement of disputes in any trade; and this example was followed in other centres. Strikes became rare; Trade Unionism appeared to be justifying Applegarth's politic disclaimers of its disturbing intention. The great excitement of the years between 1867 and 1875 had completely passed away.

There was, moreover, a check to legislative as well as to industrial progress. The 'eighties were not fertile in social or industrial legislation. The Employers' Liability Act of 1880 did, by abrogating the doctrine of " common employment," take the first step towards a proper system of workmen's compensation; but it remained necessary for the workman to prove " negligence " of the employer or his agents—a point not met till the Workmen's Compensation Act of 1897. The Coal Mines Act of 1887 did at last put the miners' right to appoint checkweighmen at every colliery on a satisfactory footing, and the Truck Act of the same year, passed mainly through the insistence of Charles Bradlaugh, did some good. But these were the only important Acts dealing with industrial conditions. The textile workers formed a new Northern Counties Factory Reform Association in 1886; but this achieved no important result till the Factory Act of 1891. The most important social legislation of the 'eighties, apart from the Reform Act of 1884, which at last enfranchised the miners and agricultural labourers, related to Local Government. The Municipal Corporations Act of 1882, the Local Government (County Councils) Act of 1888, carried through the reform of local organisation which was completed by the Local Government (Parish Councils) Act of 1894.

Politically, the Trade Union Movement committed itself more and more to the Liberal creed. Trade Union leaders, resting their faith on their Conciliation Boards and Sliding Scales, joined with employers in hostility to State intervention in industry, and in opposing legal regulation of the hours of labour. The Miners' Associations in Northumberland and Durham dropped the demand

for a guaranteed minimum wage. Just when the employing classes were abandoning *laissez-faire* economics, the conversion to them of the older Trade Union leaders seemed to be complete.

In the House of Commons, the General Election of 1880 brought only one recruit, Henry Broadhurst, to the working-class ranks. After this, however, there was some revival of activity. In 1881 the Trades Union Congress instructed the Parliamentary Committee to take steps to help working-class candidatures. But nothing at all was done at the centre; and when, at the next Congress, George Shipton moved for the creation of a parliamentary fund, his resolution was heavily defeated. He returned to the attack in 1884 and 1885, with the same result. The most Congress would do in 1885 was to urge the Unions, on the motion of John Wilson, the Durham Miners' leader, to organise politically for themselves. But in 1886, the year of the next General Election, T. R. Threlfall had better success, and Congress created a special Labour Electoral Committee, side by side with the Parliamentary Committee.

At this election, the number of working-class representatives rose to eleven. Macdonald had died in 1881, and his seat had been lost; but the miners accounted for six of the eleven: Thomas Burt, John Wilson, William Abraham, William Crawford, Charles Fenwick, and Ben Pickard. The others were Broadhurst, Cremer, Howell, Leicester and Joseph Arch, who won a seat in Norfolk. But at the General Election held the following year, Arch, Leicester and Wilson lost their seats, and only two new members, James Rowlands and R. B. Cunninghame Graham, were elected. In this year the Labour Electoral Committee separated from the Trades Union Congress, and became a separate body, under the name of the Labour Electoral Association. The Labour Representation League had painlessly expired about 1881.

It must not be supposed that this handful of working-class members acted, or regarded themselves, as a separate party. They all sat and voted as Liberals; and Broadhurst accepted office as Under-Secretary to the Home Office in the Liberal Government. On specifically Labour questions they acted to some extent as a group; but on all general matters they followed the Liberal Government, and ranked as part of its majority.

The aim of the Labour Electoral Association was not to create a Labour Party, but to promote the return of working men to

Parliament. In 1888, it decided that all its candidates must be working men, or of working-class origin. Though it formed branches in a number of centres, and had, in 1888, an affiliated membership of 600,000, its practice was to secure the adoption of its candidates by local Liberal and Radical Associations, so that they not only sat, but stood, as Liberals. As local agencies, it mainly used the Trades Councils, at this time still dominated by Liberal Trade Unionists. It opposed three-cornered fights, and refused to support independent Labour candidates against Liberals. It lasted on until 1895, and spent its last years in a struggle against the rising force of Independent Labour.

In the period between the doctrine of the International Working Men's Association and the rise of Socialism in the 'eighties, such radical working-class propaganda as survived centred mainly round Land Reform. Until his death in 1864, Bronterre O'Brien had continued to preach a sort of agrarian Socialism in *Reynolds' Newspaper*, and after his death his mantle fell on others. The Land and Labour League, founded in 1867 and led by James Harvey, was regarded by Marx as a promising organisation, and entered into friendly relations with the British Federal Council of the " International." But the more advanced Liberals were also Land Reformers. In 1870 John Stuart Mill founded the Land Tenure Reform Association, in which Radicals such as Dilke and Thorold Rogers were associated with Trade Unionists such as Cremer, Lucraft and Odger, and several other British members of the " International." Other Land Reform organisations sprang up in the 'seventies, and prepared the way for the influence of Henry George, whose *Progress and Poverty* was published in America in 1879, and soon began to sell largely in Great Britain. In 1882 Alfred Russel Wallace published his *Land Nationalisation*. But by that time British Socialism was beginning anew.

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CHAPTER VIII. SOCIALISM AND THE DOCK STRIKE

1. The Return of Socialism
2. The Trade Union Revival
3. The London Dock Strike

I

The Return of Socialism

By 1880 the continental Socialist Movement was beginning to take its modern shape, and to recover from the repression which had followed the Paris Commune of 1871. In Germany the followers of Marx and Lassalle had united in 1875 to form the unified German Social Democratic Party on the basis of the Gotha Programme. In France, Jules Guesde had organised the Parti Ouvrier in 1876. Both these Parties, as well as the rising movements of other countries, were Marxian in doctrine, and stood for Socialist parliamentary action and the public ownership of the means of production, which now for the first time appeared as the distinctive Socialist doctrine.

It was natural that in Great Britain, when in face of trade depression Trade Unionism was losing its strength and the benefits of Liberal-Labour political action were beginning to be questioned, the idea should arise of forming a new working-class party to act on independent lines. The political attitude of the British workers found expression at this time chiefly through the Radical workingmen's clubs, which were becoming restive as Liberalism decayed and had less to offer them. These clubs were Radical, but in no sense Socialist. They stood, however, for an advanced programme of land reform, on the lines advocated by the Land Tenure Reform Association and the other bodies mentioned in the last chapter.

In 1879 Henry George published in America his *Progress and Poverty*, advocating the Single Tax on land as the cure for all the ills of society. The book was at once introduced into Great Britain, and widely read. The land campaigns of the 'seventies had prepared the way for it; and its influence was very great. But in Great Britain the inference drawn from Henry George's arguments was that the land should pass, by nationalisation, into public ownership.

It was at this stage that Henry Mayers Hyndman, a well-known

Radical writer and a man of some wealth, conceived the idea of creating an independent working-class political movement in Great Britain. His idea was, or so he put it, something like a revival of the Chartist agitation. Hyndman had read Marx, and he appealed to Marx, still resident in London, for advice. Marx, he says, was doubtful of the practicability of the scheme; but it appears that Marx was doubtful of Hyndman as well as of the plan itself. In any case, Hyndman determined to take the plunge, and to try to build up an organisation first of all on the basis of the London Radical Working Men's Clubs. In 1881, as a result of his efforts, the Democratic Federation was formed, and in the same year he published *England for All*, a short book in which he expounded his policy, basing his fundamental doctrines directly on Marx's *Capital*.

The Democratic Federation, however, was not at the outset in any sense a Socialist or Marxian body. Its demands were for the most part those of the Chartists and of earlier generations of Reformers from the days of Major Cartwright. It stood for Universal Suffrage, Equal Electoral Divisions, Payment of Members, Abolition of the House of Lords, Prevention of Bribery and Corruption, and Triennial (instead of Annual) Parliaments. Its only other claims were for Self-government for Ireland and the Colonies and Dependencies, and for Nationalisation of the Land. In fact, Hyndman, Socialist as he himself had become, set out to create, not a Socialist Party, but an independent working-class agitation for Reform on the old Chartist lines.

For a time, the tide seemed to be flowing in favour of his plan. In 1882 Henry George came to the United Kingdom, and set out on a lecture tour in Ireland, accompanied by J. L. Joynes, a master at Eton and one of the pioneers of the new Socialist Movement. The Government arrested them both and removed them from Ireland. George, on his release, lectured in England, and had the wider influence because of the Government's action. In the same year the Trades Union Congress, against the will of the platform, carried a resolution in favour of the Nationalisation of the Land.

The Radical Clubs, however, refused to be captured by the Democratic Federation, and the vote of the Trades Union Congress was reversed, in a fuller meeting, the following year. It became

clear that, in face of the strength of Liberal-Labour doctrines in the Clubs and Trade Unions, there was no prospect of a big independent organisation based on either. The Democratic Federation had attracted few who were not Socialists, and in 1883 it changed front, and became definitely a Socialist body, with a more distinctly Socialist programme. It now declared for nationalisation of banking and railways as well as land, for State-aided schemes of working-class housing, for universal free education and school feeding, for the legal eight hours' day, for the public provision of work for the unemployed in Co-operative groups and workshops, for progressively graduated taxation, and for the speedy redemption of the National Debt. In the following year, it started *Justice*, the first modern Socialist newspaper in Great Britain, and adopted the name of the Social Democratic Federation. It also found in William Morris, poet and craftsman, a powerful new recruit, who brought both money and energy to the Socialist cause.

Scarcely, however, had this reorganisation been carried through when violent dissensions arose inside the Social Democratic Federation. It had been joined by men of very different views on questions of policy—from orthodox Social Democrats who believed in parliamentary action to Anarchists who would have none of it, and from keen Trade Unionists who wanted to reform the Unions from within to pure politicians who regarded the Unions as mere impediments to the conversion of the workers to Socialism. All were agreed in attacking the Trade Unions as they were; and in 1884 the S.D.F. issued a manifesto violently denouncing them for their compromising policy. But they were not agreed about the attitude which the workers ought to adopt towards them. A third, and equally serious, cause of dissension was personal. Hyndman was both exclusively political in his outlook and extremely autocratic in his methods. Soon, within the S.D.F., relations were severely strained.

By the end of 1884 these dissensions had led to a positive split. Under the leadership of William Morris and Belfort Bax, the malcontents broke off, and founded a rival body—the Socialist League. The chief occasion of the split seems to have arisen over the question of immediate parliamentary action. Hyndman and his followers had made up their minds that the S.D.F. must take

the field at once as a political party, and begin to fight parliamentary elections. Morris and his followers, who included the Anarchists, were opposed to this, either because they were against parliamentary action altogether, or because they thought electioneering premature until by Socialist propaganda the electorate had been much more fully educated in the new ideas.

The Socialist League was never a large body. But under Morris and Belfort Bax it had a considerable educational influence, especially on the Clyde. In 1885 it started the *Commonweal*, which Morris edited until 1889, contributing to it *News from Nowhere* and many of his best Socialist writings. For it he wrote, in collaboration with Belfort Bax, *Socialism, Its Growth and Outcome*, expounding the Marxian theory of history and the struggle of classes. The Socialist League opposed parliamentary action, and laid stress on the necessity of building up the new Society on the basis of a Trade Unionism purged of reformism and converted to Socialist ideas. It borrowed, like Syndicalism later, from Anarchist ideas of social organisation, and anticipated much of Guild Socialist doctrine. But gradually the Anarchist element in it got the upper hand. In 1889 Morris was deprived of the editorship of the *Commonweal;* and in the following year he resigned. Thereafter the Socialist League fell to pieces, and only a remnant of Morris's own followers held together in the little Hammersmith Socialist Society until their leader's death in 1896.

Meanwhile, the Social Democratic Federation went on its way under the leadership of Hyndman and H. H. Champion. In 1885, after the Reform Act, came a General Election. The S.D.F., helped in two cases by the money of Conservatives who hoped to split the Liberal vote, put up three candidates. At Nottingham, John Burns, without the aid of Tory gold, got 598 votes. The other two candidates, at Kennington and Hampstead, polled 32 and 27. The fiasco was complete, and seemed likely to deal the S.D.F. a crushing blow.

The trade slump saved it. There had been a revival of industry from 1881 to 1883; but from 1884 to 1886 trade got progressively worse. Unemployment rose from just over 2 per cent. in 1882 to over 10 per cent. in 1886. The S.D.F. retrieved its position by putting itself at the head of a growing agitation among the unemployed. In 1886 and 1887 the new Socialism first began to be

an influence beyond a narrow circle in London, and to produce an impression on the Trade Union Movement. The changed situation speedily influenced its attitude. In 1884 it had regarded the Trade Unions merely as reactionary craft organisations which diverted the workers' minds from Socialism. In 1887 it urged all its members to join Unions and to work from the inside for their conversion to a Socialist attitude. From the beginning of the unemployed agitation to the great Dock Strike of 1889, the S.D.F., which had been a purely political body, assumed the leadership of a growing industrial agitation. In order to follow this startling development, we must now survey the new forces which, in the 'eighties, were arising in the Trade Union world to challenge the supremacy of the old leaders. For, while Socialism was developing as a political creed, the Unions were also undergoing a process of transformation from within which corresponded to the changed economic situation.

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II

The Trade Union Revival

We have seen how, in the early 'seventies, there was a great rush into the Trade Unions of workers who had been unorganised before. The Miners' Unions had become a power in the 'sixties; but both the National Union and the Amalgamated Association of Miners reached their high-water mark in the early 'seventies. Then Joseph Arch organised the agricultural labourers; then the railwaymen formed their Amalgamated Society; then the Gas-stokers created their Union which went down in the prosecution of 1872. We have seen, also, how this " New Unionism " of the 'seventies died out in the trade depression which reached its height in 1879. The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants shrank up into a friendly society of small membership and influence; the agricultural Unions mostly disappeared. The Amalgamated Miners' Association died out; and the National Union hardly survived outside Northumberland and Durham, though it continued to act as the convening body for periodical National Conferences of delegates from the various coalfields.

In the depression, as we have noted already, the miners in most of the coalfields passed under the operation of the " sliding scale." But early in the 'eighties the revolt against this system set in. The falling price level made it work peculiarly to the miners' disadvantage, and everywhere wages had dropped more heavily than in other trades. This fact led to a campaign amongst the younger miners against the sliding scale system, and in favour of the establishment of a minimum, not regulated by the price of coal, below which wages should not be allowed to fall. In 1881 the Yorkshire miners, hitherto divided into two separate associations, amalgamated to form the Yorkshire Miners' Association, and ended the sliding scale system.

During the next few years, there was great activity in the coalfields. In 1882 the Lancashire Miners, almost unorganised since

the fall of the " Amalgamated," united to form the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Federation. In the West of Scotland, Keir Hardie became active in the Ayrshire Miners' Union, of which he became the first secretary on its reorganisation. In 1885 the Mid and West Lothian Miners' Association was re-formed; and in 1886 the various Unions in Scotland joined together in the Scottish Miners' Federation. The Midland Miners' Federation was formed in 1885. In South Wales and in the North East there were serious troubles over the sliding scale. The Durham Miners terminated the scale in 1884, and were with difficulty persuaded by their leaders to renew it. In South Wales, where Unionism was nearly dead, except in Monmouth, and only a shadowy Sliding Scale Association kept the various districts together, the formation of a new Union was proposed at the Sliding Scale Conference of 1886, and in the following year the men voted to end the scale, and were with difficulty talked into renewing it. In the same year the Northumberland Miners struck unsuccessfully against a reduction in wages.

At length, in 1888, a new move was made. The districts which were against the sliding scale and in favour of a minimum wage decided at a National Conference to form a new Federation of their own, and to throw off their shadowy allegiance to the old National Union, now wholly dominated by the Northumberland and Durham leaders. No district governed by a sliding scale was to be allowed to enter the new body. Thus the Miners' Federation of Great Britain was born. It began with only 36,000 members, but rose rapidly to over 200,000 in 1893. Durham and Northumberland, with a few small districts, remained outside. Not until 1908 did the two great districts of the North East throw in their lot with the new Federation.

The battle against the sliding scale, however, was in most districts speedily won. Durham ended it in 1889, and soon South Wales, where it survived till 1903, was the only important district still regulated by this system. The delegates of the new Miners' Federation became a power at the Trades Union Congress, and lent valuable aid in its transformation under the influence of the new ideas.

In other industries, also, new Unions were arising. In 1881 the woollen industry, hitherto almost unorganised apart from a

few small skilled crafts, created the General Union of Textile Workers, in which the spinners, weavers and less skilled workers began to enrol in considerable numbers. In 1884 the remaining local Weavers' Associations joined the North East Lancashire Weavers' Amalgamation, and formed the Amalgamated Weavers' Association. The Card and Blowing Room Operatives' Amalgamation followed in 1886, and in the following year nearly all the Unions in the cotton trades drew together in the United Textile Factory Workers' Association, a body formed less for industrial purposes than for the promotion of factory reform by political means. In the same year, John Hodge formed in Scotland the Steel Smelters' Union, and began his long and ultimately successful fight against the " contract " system in the iron trades. And, in the same year, Ben Tillett, a docker in the Port of London, formed the Tea Operatives and General Labourers' Union, and began the great struggle of the transport workers, while in the North, Havelock Wilson began the building up of the National Sailors' and Firemen's Union.

In other respects 1887 was a fateful year. Then both the unemployed troubles and the struggle between old and new at the Trades Union Congress reached a critical phase. The struggle at Congress had really begun with the Land Nationalisation resolution carried in 1882. But, as we have seen, this decision was reversed in the following year, and until 1887 similar resolutions were regularly defeated. In 1883, however, Adam Weiler, an old Socialist and former follower of Marx in the " International," successfully carried, against the platform, a resolution in favour of the legal eight hours' day. But, even so, nothing was done by the Parliamentary Committee, still dominated by the old school, to make this effective.

The first really organised attack of the " new " Unionists came in 1887, the first Congress attended by Keir Hardie. The Parliamentary Committee had, under pressure from Congress, sent delegates to the International Labour Congresses of 1883 and 1886; but when the latter Congress instructed them to convene its successor in London, they referred the proposal to the 1887 Trades Union Congress, and played for its rejection. On this point the old school leaders met their first signal defeat. A second followed when the Congress voted for the Nationalisation of the Land,

In the meantime, the Social Democrats had placed themselves at the head of the unemployed agitation. Protectionism, under the name of " Fair Trade," was just in these years the theme of an active campaign, which extended to the sending of subsidised delegates, nominally representing small Trade Unions, to the Trades Union Congress. In January 1886, the Fair Traders arranged for a demonstration in Trafalgar Square. The Social Democrats at once organised a counter-demonstration of the unemployed for the same time and place. The police shifted the unemployed procession from the Square towards Hyde Park. As it passed along Pall Mall, there were jeers from the windows of some of the fashionable clubs, and the demonstrators replied by smashing the windows. Hyndman, John Burns, H. H. Champion and J. E. Williams were then arrested, and brought to trial. Burns delivered a fiery speech in court, and Hyndman practised diplomacy. All four were acquitted by the jury. This incident gave a great impetus to the agitation. Immediately after the procession a large relief fund was raised for the unemployed, and the prestige of the Social Democrats was greatly increased.

In 1887 trade, though still bad, was improving, and the unemployed agitation began to ebb. But by this time the Social Democrats had other strings to their bow. A great Radical demonstration on the Irish question had been arranged for Trafalgar Square; but the use of the Square was forbidden by the Government. The demonstrators resolved to defy the prohibition, and publicly announced that they proposed to hold the meeting. The Government packed the Square with soldiers and police, through whose ranks columns of demonstrators fought in vain to make a passage. Many were injured, and John Burns and Cunninghame Graham were arrested and sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment. The day of the meeting came to be known as " Bloody Sunday." But other meetings followed, and at one, in 1888, a workman named Linnell was killed by the police. The Socialists arranged a great funeral procession, and William Morris wrote his death-chant for the occasion:—

> " Not one, not one, nor thousands must they slay,
> But one and all if they would dusk the day."

During these years the propaganda of the Socialists first reached

the ears of the ordinary workman. There was a rain of pamphlets and leaflets, and the Socialist press attained to a respectable circulation. *Justice* and the *Commonweal* were reinforced by other papers. In 1887 Keir Hardie founded *The Miner*, which was to grow into the *Labour Leader* two years later. In 1888 Champion started *The Labour Elector*, as the organ of the movement for independent Labour representation in Parliament. Annie Besant edited another new journal, *The Link*. In all these papers the old Trade Union leaders, and the " Lib-Labs " in Parliament, were fiercely attacked. In 1888, moreover, the movement for Labour representation took a new direction. Keir Hardie stood as Independent Labour candidate in a three-cornered bye-election at Mid-Lanark. The " Lib-Lab " leaders of the Labour Electoral Association opposed him, and he got only 712 votes. But the results were far-reaching. At the beginning of 1889 the Scottish Labour Party came into being as a direct outcome of the contest. A new movement for Labour representation was beginning outside and apart from the Social Democratic Federation.

A discussion of the significance of this new development will arise when we have carried somewhat further the story of the " New Unionism " which was behind it. We have seen how Trade Unionism, under the control of the older leaders, had surrendered completely to *laissez-faire* ideas, just at the time when these ideas were wearing out in face of the changing conditions of trade and industry. The leaders, with a few exceptions, were as vehement as the employers against State interference, and believed in settling all issues by conciliation based on the assumption that the real interests of Capital and Labour were the same. The Socialists, reacting against this view, were at first disposed to dismiss the Trade Unions as useless, or even to regard them as bulwarks of Capitalism and as the means of keeping the workers divided into craft groups and so concealing the real unity of their class interests. This was the basis of the S.D.F.'s attack on Trade Unions in 1884. Later, under the influence of Tom Mann and other leaders of the younger Trade Unionists, the S.D.F. officially changed its tune, and advised all its members to join their Unions and to work for their transformation from within. But most of its leaders were still inclined to envisage the class struggle as purely a political affair; and the S.D.F., as an organisa-

ion, was never quite at home in its dealings even with the new Unions which were springing up.

There were several reasons for this. One was the domineering personality and exclusively political outlook of Hyndman, and his ascendancy in the S.D.F. A second was the use of a Marxian phraseology which was so much Greek, not only to the main body of the workers, but even to most of the new Trade Union leaders. A third, certainly not less important, was that the S.D.F. paid the penalty of being the pioneer. It had been for some years a tiny circle of theoretical Socialists, endeavouring to preach the new gospel to an uninterested world. Inevitably, it had on its hands ample time and opportunity for exploring its own theoretical position. But such a situation gives the maximum of chance, both for the development of dissensions on points of theory, and for the working out, on the basis of these dissensions, of a rigid theoretical orthodoxy which it is treason to question. In this sense, and for these reasons, the S.D.F. by 1888 had become highly doctrinaire, and had proportionately lost its efficiency and appeal as a propagandist body.

The " New " Unionists were hardly less political in outlook than the S.D.F., and, so far as their immediate programme was concerned, were advocating many of the same reforms. But their tendency, even if they were Socialists and members of the S.D.F., was to concentrate attention on these reforms, and to give their whole agitation a severely practical turn. In the years of which we have been speaking, the first planks in their programme were the compulsory eight hours' day and the living wage. In the unemployed agitation they put forward the eight hours' day as the cure for unemployment—Tom Mann published his pamphlet expounding this view in 1886. In the Trades Union Congress they fought the old leaders on the question of an Eight Hours' Bill. In their Union branches they stressed above all this and the need for a minimum wage. When Nationalisation figured at all in their propaganda, it occupied a far less prominent position than these reforms.

But, if the remedies proposed by the " New " Unionists were legislative, they could clearly hold out no hope of immediate legislation. And the mass of the workers to whom they made their appeal wanted something immediate. Inevitably, the out-

come of their propaganda, as soon as trade became good enough to offer a hope of success, was an outbreak of strikes.

By 1888 unemployment had fallen from over 10 per cent. to 5 per cent., and trade was rapidly improving. A small, but significant, strike in May of this year was the advance warning of the coming upheaval. In *The Link*, Mrs. Besant exposed the appalling conditions of the London match-girls. The article reached the girls, and nearly 700 of them struck. Mrs. Besant and her friends gathered funds to help them, and after a fortnight the employers gave way. The first blow had been struck; but few realised in 1888 how great a struggle was soon to come.

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III

The Dock Strike of 1889

In the annals of the working-class movement, 1889 is remembered chiefly as the year of the great Dock Strike in London. It is really far more than that—a year in which the gathering storm of industrial unrest suddenly burst, and the New Unionism became a recognised power in Great Britain.

Trade was very good, better than it had been since the early 'seventies. The great depression seemed to be quite over, and the lost markets to have been made good. Practically every industry except agriculture was prosperous. Unemployment had fallen nearly to two per cent., and remained at that level through both 1889 and 1890. The opportunity was therefore for the workers extraordinarily favourable for a forward industrial movement.

As in 1872, but with better success, the London gasworkers took the lead. Early in 1889 they began again to organise, and in May the Gasworkers' and General Labourers' Union was formed, with Will Thorne at its head. At this time the gasworkers worked a twelve-hour shift; they now demanded the immediate concession of the eight-hour day. In August the demand was formally presented, and to the general surprise the gas companies gave way. The Gasworkers' Union had won the eight hours' day without striking a blow.

A few months later came a set-back. There were three big gas companies in London. At two of these no trouble arose; but the third, under Sir George Livesay, made up its mind to fight the Union. At the end of 1889 it again enforced the twelve-hour shift, and refused to employ Trade Unionists, instituting at the same time a scheme of profit-sharing. In this case the men were beaten; but elsewhere the eight-hour day was retained, and in some cases a higher wage secured as well.

In August, the set-back of December was not foreseen, and the Gasworkers' success had its immediate reactions throughout the

country. Especially it affected the position at the London docks, where a small strike had broken out at the West India Dock just at the moment of the Gasworkers' victory. Swiftly the movement spread, until practically all Dockside was at a standstill. Everywhere the men demanded a wage of sixpence an hour, special payment for overtime, the abolition of sub-contracting and piecework, and that four hours (or a half shift) should be the minimum period of employment. Ten thousand men came out on strike.

The vast majority of the dockers were at this time outside any Union. The Stevedores (the skilled men who load ships) had two Unions, and were fairly well organised. The only dock labourers' Union seems to have been the little Tea-porters' and General Labourers' Union, founded by Ben Tillett two years before. But during the dispute the strikers streamed rapidly into the Unions, and " Trade Unionism for All " became the war-cry of the " New Unionists."

The dockers' struggle lasted for a month, and received wider publicity throughout the world than had been given to any previous dispute. Nearly £50,000 was raised by public subscription for the strikers, and this enabled reasonable strike allowances to be paid. The dock employers, for all their efforts, were unable to secure an adequate supply of blacklegs; for the feeling of solidarity had spread from trade to trade, and the striking dockers, with public sympathy behind them, had sometimes a short way with interlopers. The employers felt even middle-class opinion to be against them. The first results of Charles Booth's great survey of the *Life and Labour of the People of London* had opportunely just been made public, and no one could defend the appalling conditions under which the casually employed dockers lived and worked. Finally, Cardinal Manning and Sydney Buxton were accepted as mediators, and practically the whole of the dockers' demands were conceded. The " docker's tanner " became an accomplished fact.

The dock strike gave the Socialists an even better opportunity for propaganda than the unemployed agitation of three years before. They led the struggle. Ben Tillett was aided by Tom Mann and John Burns, who, both engineers by trade and members of the A.S.E., became the chief organisers of the dock workers.

Burns, indeed, was the real leader of the strike—at any rate in the eyes of the public.

The resounding successes of the gasworkers and dockers in London at once produced their effects all over the country. The Sailors' and Firemen's Union enrolled many thousands of members. While the Tea-porters' Union was being transformed into the Dock, Wharf, Riverside, and General Workers' Union, with Tillett as secretary, James Sexton was creating the National Union of Dock Labourers at Liverpool, and this Society soon spread to Scotland and Ireland. On the North-East Coast the Tyneside and National Labour Union, which later became the National Amalgamated Union of Labour, enrolled both dockers and general workers and even spread into the mining districts. The Gasworkers' Union became a national body, and organised not only gasworkers, but also general labourers of every kind. The National Agricultural Labourers' Union revived and a new body, the Eastern Counties Labour Federation, enrolled 17,000 members, including both farm and general workers. The General Railway Workers' Union arose as a rival to the old-fashioned and inactive Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants.

These new Unions differed markedly in policy and organisation from the older Amalgamated Societies. It had been a firm principle of the "Old" Unionists that Trade Unionism could only thrive on the basis of a firm conjunction of trade and friendly activities. They aimed at holding their members in times of bad trade by means of friendly benefits. The member who had paid money into his society in expectation of superannuation benefit in his old age had a plain interest in keeping up his contributions, even at a considerable sacrifice and even if his Union could do little for him industrially. The Old Unionists held that Unions formed on any other basis might thrive temporarily in times of trade prosperity and industrial unrest, but that they would necessarily perish in the subsequent depression.

There was evident force in this argument; but it wholly ignored the disadvantages of the type of organisation in which the "Old" Unionists believed. Societies of this type must have high rates of contribution, and must be very careful of their funds. The latter obligation led them to discourage even justifiable strikes and forward movements, and to place all their reliance in conciliation

and arbitration; the former had an even more serious drawback in that it practically restricted their membership to those who could afford high contributions—that is, to a limited group of relatively well paid and highly skilled workers.

It is true that this type of Unionism was not at any time universal. In the cotton trades, while the Spinners' Unions were of this kind, the Weavers' and Cardroom Operatives' Unions, having to cater largely for women's labour, could not force up rates of contribution at all high. And among the miners, while in Northumberland and Durham and one or two other districts the Miners' Associations became largely assimilated to the " Amalgamated Societies " of the skilled craftsmen, lower contributions and a more inclusive policy were more the rule, and became the recognised basis of the new Unions founded in the 'eighties, and of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain.

These two industries stood, however, somewhat apart from the rest, and the Amalgamated Societies of Engineers, Carpenters and other types of skilled workers appeared far more typical of the " Old " Unionism which the " New " Unionists were out to challenge. In most cases, the " New " Unions dispensed with friendly benefits altogether, and concentrated on the possession of funds for use in strikes and lock-outs and in the expenses of organising and administration. Their leaders denounced friendly benefits as leading to stagnation and reaction in industrial policy. They set out to build up Unions which would be able to appeal to the entire working class, and to follow a fighting policy based on class solidarity and directed, by implication at least, against the capitalist system itself. In short, the " New " Unions were in intention Socialist, in the sense that the leaders, while they concentrated on immediate " bread and butter " issues, had as their further objective a definitely Socialist policy of class organisation and action.

The industrial unrest of 1889 reacted on the " Old " Unions in addition to creating the " New." In 1889 the skilled workers' Societies in the engine shops and shipyards at last drew together, under the influence of Robert Knight, the leader of the Boilermakers, in the Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades Federation. The membership of the " Old " Unions went up by leaps and bounds. The Bricklayers and the Railway Servants more than

doubled their membership; the Boot and Shoe Operatives rose from 12,000 to over 30,000 in 1891. The Engineers, the Carpenters—in short, every Union—experienced an inrush of new members. There are no exact figures of total Trade Union membership before 1892; but it is safe to say that before 1888 there were not more than three-quarters of a million Trade Unionists in Great Britain. By 1892 the total had risen to over a million and a half.

From the less skilled manual workers the wave of organisation spread to the " black-coated proletariat." The National Union of Clerks was formed in 1890, and in the following year came the Shop Assistants' Union and the Amalgamated Union of Co-operative Employees. These did not gain many members; but their beginning was none the less significant of the spreading of the new ideas.

The idea of solidarity, prominent in the upheaval of 1889, led to a great extension in the number of Trades Councils, through which the local representatives of the " Old " and " New " Unions were brought together. Of the Trades Councils still alive in 1910, 11 were formed in 1889, 19 in 1890, and 21 in 1891. The remainder of the 'nineties added another 53. Thus, as a result of the " New " Unionism, Trades Councils, previously found as a rule only in the larger centres, spread over practically the whole of the industrial districts, and provided an opportunity for Socialist propaganda, and for the regular interchange of information and ideas between trade and trade.

Wages rose sharply during this great boom in Trade Union activity. With or without strikes, the workers in nearly every trade secured advances. Wages rose least among the skilled craftsmen enrolled in the old-fashioned Unions; but even they added greatly to their membership and secured a share in the general improvement. The largest gains of all went to the miners; the wages of coal-hewers actually rose by more than a third between 1888, when the Miners' Federation was formed, and 1891. Practically all the " new " Unions of less skilled workers gained substantial advances for their members. On the average, wages in all trades rose at least 10 per cent. in these three years, whereas prices rose less than 4 per cent.

The effect of these successes was speedily shown at the Trades

Union Congress. In 1889, indeed, the "new" Unionists suffered a defeat. Making the mistake of attacking the persons rather than the policy of the old leaders, they aroused intense antagonism on the part of the delegates, and were overwhelmingly beaten. The following year they had learnt wisdom, and, eschewing personal attacks, put forward a long series of resolutions embodying their policy. The demand for a legal eight hours' day, long the test issue between the parties, was at last endorsed, and nearly all the Socialist resolutions were carried. The "new" Unionism had captured the Trades Union Congress, and Henry Broadhurst resigned his position as secretary.

This victory was, of course, due to the conversion of many of the older Unions. The delegates of the Engineers and the Carpenters all voted, under instructions, in favour of the legal eight hours' day. The Socialists had not only founded the "new" Unions, but were also rapidly permeating the old.

The object of the Socialist leaders of the "new" Unions was not, however, to be secured merely by the passing of their resolutions at the Trades Union Congress. Their policy was one of State action, and almost all their main demands were demands for legislation. In these circumstances, they aimed above all at the creation of a powerful working-class political party, ready to pursue an independent policy based on Socialist ideas. The political movement which gave rise to the Independent Labour Party and the Labour Party came naturally out of the industrial movement which created the "new" Unionism. Out of the Socialist propaganda of the 'eighties had come the "new" Unions; now out of the "new" Unions came a new political movement.

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CHAPTER IX. INDEPENDENT LABOUR

1. The Independent Labour Party
2. Trade Unionism in the 'Nineties
3. The Labour Representation Committee

I

The Independent Labour Party

We have seen how, in 1888, Keir Hardie stood as third candidate for Mid-Lanark, and how in the following year the Scottish Labour Party arose out of the contest. After 1889, there was a rapid growth of similar organisations in all parts of the country. In 1891 the London Trades Council formed a London Labour Representation Committee, and in the provinces the Bradford Labour Union, the Colne Valley Labour Union, the Salford Labour Electoral Association, and many other bodies were created to work for independent Labour representation in Parliament and on local bodies. In 1890 Joseph Burgess started the *Workman's Times*, which became, with its local editions, an influential organ of the new opinions. It ceased to appear in 1894, when Keir Hardie's *Labour Leader* became a weekly, and took its place. Robert Blatchford founded the *Clarion* in 1891, and speedily made it the most widely read of all Labour journals, with a public extending far beyond Socialist circles. His book, *Merrie England*, marking the summit of his political influence, came out in 1894. *Fabian Essays* had been published in 1889, and through these years the Fabians, led by Bernard Shaw and Mr. and Mrs. Webb, poured out a steady stream of useful and informative tracts. The Socialists had at last an efficient press, and a good supply of propagandist literature.

The General Election of 1892 brought them their first parliamentary successes. On the wave of the new movement Keir Hardie was elected for West Ham, John Burns for Battersea, and J. Havelock Wilson, the leader of the then militant Sailors' and Firemen's Union, for Middlesbrough. Of these, only Wilson won in a three-cornered fight. Joseph Leicester, who was in the field as a " Lib-Lab " against Hardie, withdrew before the poll, and Burns had only a Conservative against him. Twelve " Lib-Labs," mostly miners, but including also Joseph Arch and George Howell, were also returned in 1892.

The political successes of the " independents " greatly encouraged the Socialists, and led directly to the formation of a national organisation. At the 1892 Trades Union Congress a resolution for refusing Trade Union support to all non-Socialist candidates was only defeated by twenty-five votes. The advocates of independent Labour representation held, during Congress week, a meeting of their own, and decided to call a national conference for the purpose of forming a new party on national lines.

In January 1893 the Conference met at Bradford, with Hardie in the chair, and formed the Independent Labour Party, rejecting by a large majority the alternative name of Socialist Labour Party. One hundred and twenty-four delegates attended, representing mainly local bodies from all parts of the country. The Social Democratic Federation and the Fabian Society also sent delegates, but, for opposite reasons, refused to merge their identity in the new organisation. Practically all the local bodies, including the Scottish Labour Party, came in. The I.L.P. began its existence with a large and widely diffused membership in numerous local branches.

The object of the Independent Labour Party was defined in what were regarded as distinctly Socialist terms—" to secure the collective ownership of all the means of production, distribution and exchange." Its programme, drawn up at the Conference, embodied a large number of immediate reforms, mostly to be achieved by legislation. These included the legal eight hours' day, the abolition of overtime, piece-work, and child labour, State provision out of taxes on unearned increment for the sick, the disabled, the aged, the widows and the orphans, the provision of properly paid work for the unemployed, the extension of the franchise, and the reform of taxation—a programme obviously designed for execution by an independent working-class political party, but at the same time clearly reformist and opposed to the revolutionary policy urged by the Social Democratic Federation.

Between the permeative tactics of the Fabians, who believed mainly in influencing the older parties to adopt Socialist measures piecemeal, and the Marxian revolutionism of the S.D.F., Keir Hardie and his colleagues aimed at keeping a middle course. Unlike the Fabians, they were firmly opposed to any kind of collaboration with the Liberals. But they were no less hostile to

the S.D.F. which, they alleged, scared away Trade Unionists by its talk of revolution, and uttered an unintelligible Marxian jargon devoid of propagandist appeal. Their aim was, while plainly affirming their ultimate Socialist aim, to concentrate their propaganda, as they had in the " new " Unionist agitation, mainly on immediate reforms, in the hope of thus leading the main body of the working class gently and gradually towards Socialism. Hence their rejection of the word " Socialist " from the title of their organisation; hence their preference for the title " Independent Labour," which had already shown its appealing power, and more correctly expressed their immediate policy.

Even before the formation of the I.L.P., the " new " Unionists had been turning their attention to local as well as national government. The Local Government Act of 1888 had enlarged the opportunities for such action, and in London and the mining areas Labour candidates were put up for the new County Councils. John Burns was elected to the London County Council in 1889. In these developments the influence of the Fabians counted for a great deal; for they, under Webb's influence, were keen advocates of " Municipal Socialism," and their pamphlets provided ammunition for Labour candidates at the local elections. The new I.L.P. eagerly took up this policy, which had much effect in training its members, by service on local bodies, for reformist parliamentary activity.

The " new " Unionists had now a national party of their own. They did not, however, cease to attempt the capture of the Trades Union Congress, or to urge the Trade Unions themselves to form an independent working-class party. At the Congress of 1893 they secured substantial successes. The delegates voted for the establishment of a special fund for the support of independent working-class candidates, and also decided to support only candidates who subscribed to the Socialist slogan of " collective ownership and control of the means of production, distribution and exchange." Congress, however, still refused to go to the length of establishing an independent working-class party, and Hardie's amendment to secure this was defeated by twenty-three votes.

There is an apparent contradiction in the attitude of the new leaders who, having set up a political party of their own, were still endeavouring to persuade the Trades Union Congress to set up

another. But the contradiction is only apparent. Throughout, the aim of Keir Hardie and his friends was to establish a political party under Socialist leadership and guidance, but definitely based on the mass organisation of the Trade Union movement. They were well aware that, without the active participation of the Trade Unions, they could not hope either to create or to finance a really powerful working-class party; and they had set up the I.L.P. rather as the forerunner of an effective Labour Party than as itself the party they desired to see. Throughout the following years Hardie was never weary of affirming his belief in the policy of the "Labour alliance," by which he meant the linking up of the Socialist I.L.P. with the organised economic power of the Trade Union movement.

This policy, of course, involved too much of compromise and of keeping Socialism in the background, to satisfy Hyndman and his followers of the S.D.F. They wanted a party definitely Marxian, and based on the model of the German Social Democratic Party. Also, they felt that, having done the pioneer work of Socialism in Great Britain, they were being brushed aside by the "new" Unionists for whose advent they were largely responsible. They were, however, helpless; for Hardie's opportunist Socialism made a far stronger appeal than their Marxism to the younger Trade Unionists, because it offered an immediate and easily intelligible programme of reform directly grounded on Trade Union needs and claims.

The I.L.P., therefore, made rapid headway, while the S.D.F. stagnated. No further progress, indeed, was made at the Trades Union Congress of 1894, and no steps were taken by the Parliamentary Committee to give effect to the resolution for the establishment of a parliamentary fund. But Hardie was doing excellent propagandist work in the House of Commons, especially in connection with the Hull dockers' strike of 1893 and the national mining strike of the same year. The membership of the I.L.P. was growing rapidly, and many new branches were being formed. In 1895 the membership stood at 6,000, and included most of the younger active Trade Union leaders and the keenest local Labour workers in many districts. Weaknesses were to reveal themselves later; but for the time the I.L.P. seemed to be undoubtedly on the road to success.

Set-backs were soon to come. In 1894 the new party fought several bye-elections without success, and at the General Election of 1895 it put twenty-eight candidates in the field. Keir Hardie was among them; but John Burns and Havelock Wilson had both remained outside the new body, and had by this time passed into definite hostility. They both held their seats; but Hardie, in a straight fight against a Conservative, lost his, and not a single I.L.P. member was returned. The " Lib-Labs " lost three seats, and independent Labour ceased for the time to be represented in the House of Commons. Hyndman stood for Burnley, and the S.D.F. put several other candidates in the field; but none were returned.

In the meantime, the Trades Union Congress had been reforming itself. The Socialist victory of 1893 had led to the charge that the Congress was being perverted to political uses, and in 1894 the Parliamentary Committee was instructed to revise the standing orders. It used this power to make drastic changes. The Trades Councils, in which the " new " Unionist and Socialist element predominated, were expelled from Congress, though they had actually been its founders, on the plea that their presence involved " dual representation," their affiliated branches being represented also through the national Unions to which they belonged. At the same time the personnel of the delegates was restricted to Trade Union officials or men actually working at their trades—a change which excluded John Burns, then actually Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee, and Henry Broadhurst and Keir Hardie, the leaders of the rival groups of " old " and " new " Unionists. The " card vote," under which decisions are taken, not by the delegates voting as individuals, but in accordance with the number of members represented by each delegate, was also introduced. These changes went far to undo the Socialist victory of 1893, and postponed for a few years more the decisive entry of the Trade Union movement into independent political action. James Mawdsley, the Conservative leader of the Cotton Spinners, is said to have been the prime mover in this change, which was carried through mainly by an appeal to working men to exclude political adventurers from their ranks—a manœuvre repeated of late years in the unsuccessful appeal during the war for a new Trade Union Labour Party free from the influence of Socialist " intellectuals."

The success of the Socialists at Congress was, however, only postponed. They were still able to get representatives elected as Trade Union delegates, and by 1899 their majority was again secure. In 1897, and again in 1898, a proposal to ask the Unions whether they would agree to a political levy was defeated. A number of Unions were, and had long been, paying the election expenses of their own members and supporting them while they sat in Parliament. The miners had done this ever since 1874, and other Unions had followed their example. But the proposal for a general levy to be paid into a common fund for Labour representation raised a different set of issues, and even in 1899 the Socialists were not strong enough to carry such a scheme.

Instead, and as the easier way of proceeding, the resolution carried by the Congress of 1899 instructed the Parliamentary Committee to call, apart from the Congress, a special Congress of representatives from " Co-operative, Socialist, Trade Union, and other working-class organisations " in order to " devise ways and means for the securing of an increased number of Labour Members in the next Parliament." No mention was made of a levy, and it was by no means clear that any form of permanent organisation was proposed.

Out of this equivocal resolution arose the Labour Party.

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II

Trade Unionism in the 'Nineties

While the " new " Unionists were busy forming the Independent Labour Party, and urging the Trades Union Congress to adopt a Socialist policy, the " new " Unionism itself was menaced by a change in the economic situation. By the end of 1891 the trade boom was at an end. Unemployment rose from 2 per cent. in 1890 to over 6 per cent. in 1892, and over 7 per cent. in 1893. The membership represented at the Trades Union Congress fell from 1,593,000 in 1890 to 721,000 in 1893. The " new " Unions lost members almost as fast as they had made them during the boom. Once more the old leaders prophesied the speedy disappearance of the new forces which threatened their supremacy. Once more they proclaimed that only high contributions and friendly benefits, which the " new " Unionists denounced, could hold the workers together in any stable combination proof against the fluctuations of trade.

The old leaders were wrong. The " new " Unions were seriously reduced in membership; but they did not disappear. After 1893 trade began to mend, and the years from 1896 to 1900 brought a new trade boom. In 1899 the unemployment rate again fell to 2 per cent., and by the end of the century the " new " Unions had regained most of the members they had lost. In 1900 the Trades Union Congress had 1,250,000 affiliated members, and the total number of Trade Unionists had risen again to 1,972,000 —probably about the same total as ten years before. No figures of total membership are available before 1892, when the Board of Trade gave the number as 1,501,000; but this was probably a decline from the level of a year before.

The 'nineties were, for the Trade Unions, a time of trouble followed by partial recovery. In 1891, alarmed by the growth of the " new " Unionism, the Conservative Government appointed a Royal Commission on Labour, to discuss the entire question of

industrial relations. Seven Trade Unionists were given seats upon it; but six of them belonged to the old school, and Mr. Tom Mann was the only representative of the "new" Unionism. The Commission did not issue its final Report until 1894; but from 1892 it poured forth a stream of memoranda on all phases of the labour question. In the event, it accomplished nothing; but for a time it seemed as if it might lead to a serious attack on the legal position gained by the Trade Unions in 1871 and 1875. A section of the Commissioners desired to introduce a system under which collective agreements would become enforceable at law, and Trade Union funds would be liable for any breach of such agreements by their members. In the end, however, this plan only secured the support of a minority of the Commission, who put it forward in a separate memorandum. The Majority Report was, on the whole, innocuous and non-committal. A Labour Minority Report was presented; but three of the Trade Unionists on the Commission refused to sign this, and acted with the Majority.

Meanwhile, a series of big industrial conflicts had been in progress. In 1893, when trade and employment were at their worst, the employers in many industries demanded substantial reductions in wages. In that year took place a general stoppage of the Lancashire cotton spinners, and a strike of miners which extended over most of the English coalfields—the first great conflict in which the Miners' Federation as a whole was concerned.

The Lancashire cotton strike lasted twenty weeks, and ended in a compromise on the whole favourable to the workers, who got off with a comparatively small reduction in wages. The most important feature of the settlement was the famous Brooklands Agreement, which set up machinery for the adjustment of future disputes without stoppage of work. From 1893 onwards this agreement governed conditions in the spinning mills, and no important strike or lock-out took place.

A second important dispute of 1893 was the Hull dock strike—a struggle forced on by the Shipping Federation in an attempt to break the power of the Sailors' and Firemen's Union, and ending in a settlement unfavourable to the workers. Keir Hardie's work in concentrating attention through Parliament on this struggle has been mentioned above.

By far the greatest conflict of the year, however, was the miners' strike, in which 400,000 men were involved. Miners' wages, which had risen very fast during the boom, were now rapidly cut down as prices fell with the slump. The Miners' Federation, which had rejected the sliding scale, demanded that there should be a minimum below which wages should not fall whatever the course of trade or prices might be. For more than four months the main English coalfields (but not those of Scotland, South Wales or the North-East Coast) were paralysed by the strike, at the end of which the miners, though they had to submit to considerable reductions, gained the practical recognition of the minimum wage rate. The settlement was followed by the establishment of the English Coal Conciliation Board for the " Federated Area " (Lancashire, Yorkshire, the Midlands and North Wales) which continued to govern wage-rates in these coalfields until after 1914.

There were many other miners' strikes in these years. In 1892 the Durham miners struck against a proposed reduction, but finally, through Bishop Westcott's mediation, accepted a reduction of smaller amount. In 1893 there was a separate strike of the hauliers in South Wales. Despite the adverse trade conditions, the men claimed an advance, and were naturally defeated. In 1894 the Scottish miners struck unsuccessfully against a wage reduction; but a reorganised Scottish Miners' Federation emerged from the struggle. In 1898 the miners in the West of Scotland successfully struck for an advance. In South Wales, where the sliding scale system remained longest in force, and the miners, badly organised, were still outside the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, there was constant bickering between the " new " and old Unionists. At length, in 1898, the men struck for an advance in wages, and for a revision of the scale by which they were governed. The struggle lasted for six months, during which the men hung out grimly with practically no resources. The I.L.P. raised what funds it could to help them, and conducted a great organising campaign throughout the area, gaining members and founding branches in all the principal centres. At length, despite these efforts, the men were defeated, and driven back to work. But they were sick both of the sliding scale and of their isolation from the main body of the miners in other coalfields. The sequel to the strike was the re-formation of the South Wales Miners'

Federation, and its affiliation to the M.F.G.B. By the end of the century, the M.F.G.B. covered all the coalfields except Durham and Northumberland, which still held aloof until 1908. The National Miners' Union, the surviving fragment of Macdonald's organisation, was, however, wound up in 1898, when its last group in South Wales disappeared, and Durham withdrew, leaving Northumberland as the sole remaining district.

An indication of the prevalence of mining strikes and lock-outs during this period can be got from the fact that, between 1893 and 1900 the number of miners involved in trade disputes considerably exceeded the total of all other workers so involved. Moreover, the mining stoppages lasted, on the average, a good deal longer than those in other industries. There was no national mining dispute between 1893 and 1912; but no year passed without at least one important stoppage in one or other of the coalfields.

The railwaymen, as we saw, were roused to activity by the unrest of 1889, when the General Railway Workers' Union was founded as a rival to the old-fashioned Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. The railway workers were still very weakly organised, and the companies still refused all manner of recognition to the Unions, and denounced combination as subversive of the quasi-military discipline which they maintained to be necessary for railway work. Railway wages were very low, and hours appallingly long; and it was to the second grievance that the Unions now directed their attention. In 1890 the A.S.R.S. awoke from its slumber, and launched a new programme, chiefly directed to the reduction of hours. At the end of the same year the separate Scottish Society of Railway Servants took a more drastic step, and declared a strike for shorter hours. This was savagely defeated, and the remnants of the Scottish Society were merged in the A.S.R.S. But the stoppage, the first of any importance in the railway service, helped the agitation which the A.S.R.S. was conducting; and in 1891 Parliament was induced to appoint a Select Committee to consider the position. The enquiry led to an Act of 1893, under which the Board of Trade was given powers to deal with cases of excessive overwork. But these powers were not used, and the Unions were still too weak to make a stand.

The railway companies, with the exception of the North-

Eastern Railway, which had recognised Trade Unionism in 1890, continued their repressive policy. In 1896 the London and North-Western Railway, under Sir George Findlay's leadership, began a systematic policy of dismissing all active Trade Unionists. This, however, led to a public outcry, and the Unions were able to secure the re-instatement of the victimised men. Indeed, Sir George Findlay's action had quite the opposite effect to that which he desired. The A.S.R.S. launched its first All-Grades Programme in 1897, and actually doubled its membership during the year. All the companies were approached with demands for shorter hours, higher wages, and payment for overtime. But the employers resolutely refused to negotiate, and the Unions were not strong enough to call a strike. The All-Grades Movement was abortive, and nothing further was done nationally till the new All-Grades Movement of 1906. The Railway Clerks' Association was founded in 1897, and aroused even more hostility on the part of the companies than the Unions of manual workers; but it did not become important until the new century.

Apart from the miners, the body of workers who engaged in the greatest conflict with their employers during the 'nineties were the engineers. The Amalgamated Society of Engineers had provided many of the leaders of the " new " Unionism of 1889, and, craft Union as it was, had been considerably affected by the new ideas. It remained, in the 'nineties, by far the largest Union, apart from the miners' organisation, and very much the richest and most stably organised. In 1897 it had over 90,000 members, a reserve fund of over £300,000, and an annual income of over £500,000. Its weaknesses were its failure to include the less skilled workers in the industry, who were more and more being used to man the new simplified machines, the existence of a number of smaller rival Unions of skilled workers, and a slowness in adapting its craft policy to meet changing economic conditions. It had, moreover, against it a newly reorganised Engineering Employers' Federation, whose leaders had made up their minds to stand no nonsense.

During the 'nineties, causes of friction accumulated steadily. Engineering practice was being rapidly revolutionised by the introduction of new machines, and in nearly every factory the skilled craftsmen were fighting a rearguard action against supersession

by less skilled and less highly-paid workers. These conditions led to a succession of workshop disputes, in which the A.S.E. members demanded the removal of " labourers " from machines claimed as the monopoly of skilled men, and more generally put forward a claim for a share in the " control of industry." Early in 1897 these quarrels came to a head, and the Employers' Federation threatened a national lock-out unless the men who had struck in certain establishments returned at once to work. Temporarily, the dispute was smoothed over by the mediation of some of the other Unions. The men went back to work, and the lock-out notices were withdrawn. But a conference failed to settle the points at issue, and at this stage the London engineers declared a local strike for the forty-eight hours' week. The employers met this move by a partial lock-out; and the Unions retaliated by a general strike at all works where the lock-out notices had been posted. Eventually, nearly 50,000 workers were directly involved.

The general stoppage began in July, and lasted on into the following year. The engineers received substantial help from other Unions, after their own available funds had been exhausted; but in the end they were driven back to work. The demand for the forty-eight hours' week was withdrawn, and the Unions had to promise to abstain from " interference with the management," and to agree that the employers should have the right to employ any man they chose on any type of work, or to introduce anywhere any system of payment previously operative in any establishment. Only after three ballots were the men persuaded to accept these hard terms—so hard that they were, in practice, impossible to enforce, and, after a period for recovery, local bickering over the old issues was resumed much as before. By 1900 the membership of the A.S.E. had recovered almost to the numbers in the Union before the dispute.

Of strikes in other industries during the 'nineties, the most important were the boot and shoe operatives' strike of 1895, which resulted in the establishment of a system of arbitration for the settlement of future disputes, the two unsuccessful strikes of the Dundee jute workers in 1895 and 1899, and the successful strike of the potters in 1900. On the whole, apart from the miners and engineers, the decade was one of relative industrial tranquillity. After the great unrest of 1889-90, the Unions paused to take breath,

and the energies of the new leaders were mainly absorbed in the growing political movement.

Trade Unionism, however, after the set-back of 1893, resumed its growth, and by 1900 there were nearly two million workers enrolled in Unions. There was also, side by side with the movement towards political consolidation, a movement for the closer unity of the various societies for industrial purposes. *The Clarion* took an active part in this movement, urging strongly the linking up of all Unions into a central federation for mutual defence. The engineering struggle of 1897 made the need manifest, and in 1898 the Trades Union Congress was induced, largely by the efforts of Robert Knight, the secretary of the Boilermakers' Society, to take the necessary steps for setting up a new body. The Congress, as in the case of the Labour Representation Committee, did not itself assume the new functions, or enrol all its affiliated societies in the new federation. It only called a conference, and set up a General Federation of Trade Unions, which societies were free to join or not to join as they thought fit.

In its inception, the G.F.T.U. aroused great hopes. Many people looked to it as a great co-ordinating authority for the Trade Union Movement as a whole—a sort of "One Big Union" destined to achieve great things. But in fact the new Federation was not so organised as either to supersede the Trades Union Congress, or to take any part in directing the policy of the Trade Union movement. It developed as a society for mutual insurance against strikes and lock-outs. Each Union joining it was to pay contributions at a regular rate into a central fund, and was to receive from the fund subventions at a regular rate in aid of its own expenditure on dispute pay in any strike or lock-out in which it might become involved. There was no power given to the G.F.T.U. either itself to call strikes, or to co-ordinate the policy of the Unions connected with it. Its business became merely that of an insurance society—to receive premiums, and to pay out benefits.

At the outset, forty-four Societies, with a total membership of 343,000, joined the G.F.T.U. The main strength came from the metal and textile workers and from the less important trades. The miners held aloof, perhaps fortunately for the Federation,

which a big miners' strike might speedily have made insolvent. So did many other Unions, which could not afford the contributions demanded. At first, the G.F.T.U. was subjected to no severe strain; for its early years were a period of relative industrial peace. The troubles which have attended its later history fall outside the scope of this volume.

Thus, by 1900, the Trade Union world had settled down. The "new" Unions had taken their place beside the old as an integral and permanent part of the movement. Indeed, the difference between old and new, without disappearing entirely, had been considerably blurred. The fighting enthusiasm of the "new" Unions had waned in the slump of 1893, when they had been hard put to it to hold together at all. Some of them had even abandoned their dislike of friendly benefits, and started voluntary friendly activities for such members as chose to join. Only the poverty of the less skilled workers prevented considerable further developments of this sort.

On the other hand, the old Unions had been influenced by the new. Some of them had opened their ranks to less skilled workers, and all had to some extent accepted the policy of the "new" Unionists in pressing for industrial legislation, and had largely given up their old devotion to *laissez-faire* principles. "Lib-Labism," though it was still strong, was definitely declining, and even the old Unions were more and more coming to be led by men who accepted the newer views. There were no longer two clearly defined sections in the Trade Union movement, waging mutual war. Sectional jealousies and quarrels, of course, remained; but on the whole an intermediate type of Trade Unionism, betwixt the two extremes of 1889, had been developed. The process of political consolidation, which called the Labour Party into being, served further to obliterate the old differences of type.

The growth of Trade Unionism was necessarily subject, in some degree, to the fluctuations of trade and employment. Its tendency was upward; but it always lost in a slump some of the members it gained during a boom of trade. The sister movement of consumers' Co-operation, on the other hand, pursued a steady upward course, comparatively unaffected by industrial fluctuations. During the 'nineties, there were few Co-operative events of importance. An improved Industrial and Provident Societies

Act was passed in 1893; and there were important fresh developments of the movement in Ireland, marked by the formation of the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society in 1894, and the Irish Agricultural Wholesale Society in 1898. The English Agricultural Organisation Society was formed in 1900, but did not get to work until the following year. The remaining event of importance is the formation in 1895 of the International Co-operative Alliance, linking up the growing Co-operative Movements of a large number of countries.

The chief feature of Co-operative development in the 'nineties, however, was the steady and rapid growth of membership and trade. In 1880 the number of British Co-operators, in Societies of all types, was about 600,000. By 1890 they numbered nearly a million, and by 1900 well over a million and three-quarters. The growth in capital and trade was still greater. Share capital rose from £6,226,000 in 1880 to £10,367,000 in 1890, and £23,256,000 in 1900. Sales rose from £23,000,000 in 1880 to £36,000,000 in 1890, and £77,000,000 in 1900. There was a great increase in Co-operative production by the consumers' movement, and the Co-operative Wholesale Societies greatly expanded their output of goods. Producers' Co-operation was relatively stagnant, and represented at the end of the century only an insignificant fraction of the movement as a whole.

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III

The Labour Representation Committee

We have seen how the Trades Union Congress of 1899 was induced to take the step which led to the formation of the Labour Party. After the passing of the Congress resolution, a committee representing the Trades Union Congress, the I.L.P., the S.D.F., and the Fabian Society, was appointed to make the arrangements for the proposed special Conference. This met in February, 1900, when 129 delegates attended, representing about half a million Trade Unionists (or considerably less than half the number affiliated to the Trades Union Congress), and about 70,000 members enrolled in the various Socialist societies and miscellaneous bodies.

The provisional Committee had drawn up, in advance of the Conference, a draft plan of organisation for the new body, making it an independent federation of Trade Unions, Trades Councils, and Co-operative and Socialist societies. It was to be organised quite apart from the Trades Union Congress. Bernard Shaw, Keir Hardie, and Ramsay MacDonald were among the draftsmen of this constitution, which gave the Labour Party its distinctive form as an alliance of Trade Unionism and Socialism in the political field. Keir Hardie's plan of the " Labour Alliance " had come to birth.

At the Conference, the first trouble arose over the types of candidates to be supported. Was the new body to promote the election only of candidates who were themselves members of the working class, or was it to be open to all who accepted a distinctly working-class policy? The first idea, of course, was in line with the old " Lib-Lab " conception of Labour representation, which had aimed not at the creation of a new party, but at the return to Parliament of members of the working class. The " New " Unionists and Socialists all united to attack the proposal that only working-class candidates should be supported; and it was overwhelmingly defeated.

Next came the question of objects. The S.D.F. delegates moved a resolution calling for the creation of " a distinct party —separate from the capitalist parties, based upon the recognition of the Class War, and having for its ultimate object the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange." This was far too strong meat for most of the delegates, and a counter-proposal was at once made from the opposite extreme. Alexander Wilkie, the Secretary of the Shipwrights' Association, moved that a simple platform of a few agreed working-class proposals should be drawn up, and that candidates should only be asked to subscribe to these. This would have been fatal to the formation of a distinct party or group, and was far too weak for the great majority, and in the end a compromise proposal of Keir Hardie's was unanimously accepted. It urged the establishment in Parliament of a distinct Labour Group (not Party), with its own Whips; but it also pledged the group " to co-operate with any party which, for the time being, may be engaged in promoting legislation in the direct interest of Labour "—or " in opposing measures having an opposite tendency." The I.L.P. representatives, in order to carry the Trade Union delegates with them, thus both stopped short of creating a definite new party and left the door open for a continuance of some sort of collaboration with the Liberal Party.

After some dispute, the name " Labour Representation Committee " was adopted. The new body did not take the name " Labour Party " until 1906. James Ramsay MacDonald was elected Secretary, and was largely responsible for steering the new body through the difficulties of its early years.

These began soon. Within a few months of the formation of the L.R.C. came the " Khaki Election " of 1900, held in the midst of the South African War. The L.R.C. had no money, for there was no political levy paid to it by the Unions until after the Conference of 1903. The fifteen candidates who were placed in the field were for the most part the nominees of the three affiliated Socialist bodies. The conditions were highly unfavourable, and only two seats were secured. Keir Hardie was elected for Merthyr —an aftermath of the help given by the I.L.P. in the Welsh miners' strike of 1898; and Richard Bell, the railwaymen's secretary, won a seat at Derby. The " Lib-Labs " fared ill, and their numbers were reduced to eight in the new Parliament.

The launching of the Labour Representation Committee brought to a head the long struggle of the Socialists to create an independent working-class party. The new body had, indeed, a long road to travel before it emerged as a national party in any full sense. But the Conference of 1900 gave to it the distinctive form which it has since retained, by basing it upon a federal alliance between the Trade Unions and the Socialist Societies. The Co-operators were not persuaded to join, and the most powerful Trade Union group—the Miners' Federation—remained outside till the eve of the General Election of 1910. But the form of the organisation was laid down, and thereafter it grew steadily.

Any account of its growth must be reserved for the final volume of this survey. Only in the light of later experience can it be judged whether Hardie's policy of the " Labour Alliance " was right or wrong. But this at least can be said at this stage. The Socialist Societies in 1900 could neither have formed a party of any real account without the support of the Trade Unions, nor have persuaded the Trade Unions to join a body more explicitly and pronouncedly Socialist than the L.R.C. The new body was based on compromise; but the compromise had its roots in the situation with which its founders had to cope. It seemed to them —and it was—a great achievement to have so far weaned the Trade Unions from *laissez-faire* and their subordination to the Liberal Party. The dangers inherent in this success were not equally apparent. They did not emerge clearly until after the formation of the Liberal Government of 1906.

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CHAPTER X

THE CONDITION OF THE WORKERS IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The Conditions of the Workers in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century

I ended the first volume of this history with a brief comment on the condition of the workers during the first half of the nineteenth century. It now remains to see how that position was changed during the period with which this second volume deals. We have had something to say already of the vast technical changes which revolutionised industry in the second half of the century almost as drastically as the coming of power-driven machinery had revolutionised it in the first, and of the effects of these later changes on working-class organisation and policy. We have now to approach them from a rather different angle, and to enquire how they affected the working-class ways and standards of life.

Clearly, we can look for no such sensational and obvious changes as the Industrial Revolution immediately produced in men's ways of living. There was no uprooting of a whole social order on the scale of that which followed the rise of the modern factory system. The destruction of the peasantry had been thoroughly accomplished well before 1850; and the agricultural labourer had little, though the farmer had much, to lose by the decline of agriculture which set in with the great depression of the later 'seventies. Despite the immense growth of the mining industry, the proportion of the British population living in villages continued to decline, and the proportion of town-dwellers to increase. But for the agricultural labourers of 1880, driven to the towns in search of work, there was no such wholesale change in the way of life as for the labourers of the early nineteenth century.

The technical changes in industry were not, indeed, less important or far-reaching than those of earlier times. The new methods of steel manufacture, the vast growth of the railway systems, the extraordinarily rapid expansion of the mining and engineering industries, were constantly revolutionising the methods of production, rendering old kinds of skilled labour obsolete and creating new, replacing craftsmanship by the skill of the machine-tool, and

raising up hosts of semi-skilled machine-minders to aid or supersede the skilled tradesmen. The grades and classes of labour were constantly shifting under stress of these changes, and causing drastic readjustments in wage-rates and in Trade Union rules and organisation. The proportion of workers employed in different callings was steadily changing. Cotton and wool were yielding their leadership of the industrial world, among both employers and workers, to metals and mines. The large part played by coal miners and engineers in the history of Victorian Labour is no accident, but a product of changing economic conditions.

Nevertheless, from the standpoint of the workers, the changes of the second half of the century appear far less drastic than those of the earlier period. For, apart from the steady movement of agricultural workers into the mining industry, the shifting was mainly from one factory process to another. The factory had become the recognised and accepted centre of English life; and the vast mass of the workers knew no other way of living.

Within the limits of the factory system, there is no doubt that, on the whole, working-class conditions were getting better. The factory code was being stiffened up, both by legislation and by better inspection and administration; and the methods of the Factory Acts were being gradually applied to fresh industries, including the mines. The hours of labour, still very long, were being slowly reduced, especially at first for children and women. Factories were becoming rather less vile and insanitary; and very slowly sanitary and housing conditions in the towns were being improved. It is, however, a notable fact that overcrowding remained an unsolved problem. In 1801 the average number of persons to a " house " was 5·67 ; in 1901 it had only fallen to 5·2. The crude death-rate in England and Wales had been reduced from 22·7 per thousand in 1851-5 to 16 per thousand in 1901-5, and the birth-rate from 34 to 28. The infant mortality rate, on the other hand, had actually risen from 14·6 per cent. in 1850 to 15·4 per cent. in 1900.

There had been a great decrease in crime, due in part to the diminished ferocity of the criminal law; and the number of paupers had fallen from over a million in 1850 to under 800,000 in 1900, despite the increase in population. An almost universal system of public elementary education had been built up. In

1851 the State spent only £150,000 on this service. In 1901, it was already spending nearly eleven millions, in addition to the sums expended out of local rates. The services of local government in the sphere of public health were practically created during the second half of the century. The conception that it was the State's business to take at least some precautions to safeguard the health of its citizens found expression in a re-modelled system of Local Government to which large powers were entrusted.

These changes undoubtedly made life more tolerable for the ordinary man, and gave him something to hope for in a world that to the generations before had seemed to offer no hope at all. We have seen how, given this small ground for hope, the upper strata of the Victorian working class clutched at the chance, and strove by thrift and conciliatory behaviour to make the best of things. We have watched the rise of the Friendly Societies and of the Co-operative Movement, and seen how Victorian Trade Unionism and Victorian working-class politics took their colour from the changes in the economic basis of the workers' life.

Of course, it was not for the workers alone that better times came with the settling down of industrialism in the second half of the century. A huge new middle class came into being; the professions, the managerial grades in industry, the middlemen of every sort increased enormously in numbers. Employers and financiers made fortunes undreamed of by the greatest magnates of the Industrial Revolution. In 1851 the professional classes were 2·2 per cent. of total population, and the commercial classes 4·3 per cent. By 1881 the corresponding figures were 6·2 and 7·8. In 1840 under 2,000 persons died leaving more than £500; by 1877 the number had risen to 4,478, and there were more than 1,100 persons with incomes of over £10,000 a year. There can be no doubt that, up to 1880 at least, profits were rising considerably faster than wages.

Wages, however, were rising, both in money and in purchasing power. In the absence of reliable statistics, it is not easy to present any comprehensive view of the change in the wages of the whole industrial population, and it is necessary to fall back on estimates which are admittedly based on somewhat inadequate data. But, though the precise figures are doubtful, the general tendency admits of no dispute. There were set-backs; but

between 1850 and 1900 the average real wage, measured in purchasing power, rose at least by seventy, and perhaps by as much as eighty per cent.

In two of the diagrams which illustrate this chapter, I have set out this general movement of real and money wages in graphic form. The first diagram, based mainly on Mr. G. H. Wood's figures and their arrangement by Mr. W. T. Layton, shows the annual changes in money wages, retail prices, and real wages, in so far as any of these can be correctly ascertained. The annual percentages of unemployed workers recorded by the Trade Unions making returns are also shown in order that the reader may be able to estimate the effect of trade fluctuations on wage rates. But no account has been taken, in calculating real wages, of time lost through unemployment. The diagram represents, not actual earnings, but *rates* of wages.

The second diagram reproduces Professor Bowley's rough estimate, by five-year averages, of the general movement of money wages and real wages. This makes the increase in both larger than any other estimate I have seen. But the tendency remains the same, and, save at one or two special points, the same upward and downward movements are recorded as in other estimates. In the following observations, however, the annual figures recorded in the first diagram are taken as a basis.

It will be seen that money wages rose very sharply at certain definite periods—from 1852 to 1855, from 1863 to 1866, from 1869 to 1873, from 1888 to 1890, and from 1898 to 1900. A glance at the curve of unemployment will show that each of these periods coincides roughly with a period of exceptionally good trade. A study of the curve of prices, however, modifies the first conclusion that might be drawn from these facts. Between 1852 and 1855 prices rose considerably faster than wages, and real wages considerably declined. Between 1863 and 1866, on the other hand, prices declined for most of the time, so that there was a real appreciation in the purchasing power of wages. Between 1869 and 1873 prices were at first stationary, and then rose, but not enough to offset the rise in wages. Between 1888 and 1890 prices rose far less than wages, and the same is true of 1898-1900. Real wages rose sharply at three points—between 1861 and 1864, between 1868 and 1876, and, apart from two brief set-backs in the

early and late 'nineties, through the whole period from 1882 to 1900. But, whereas the two earlier advances were mainly due to the rise in money wages, the long rise after 1882 was still more due to the fall in prices.

It will be noticed at once that the great advances in money wages coincide for the most part with periods of exceptional Trade Union activity. The early 'fifties saw the rise of the "New Model" Trade Unionism; the early 'sixties, the great development of mining Trade Unionism under Alexander Macdonald and the great growth and activity of Unionism in the building trades; the late 'sixties and early 'seventies, the great struggle of the Unions with the law, the Nine Hours' movement of the Engineers, further big developments among the miners, and the first rise of Unions among the less skilled workers; the years from 1888 to 1890, the birth of the Miners' Federation, the Gasworkers' and Dockers' Unions, and a host of other active pioneers of the "New" Unionism. The closing years of the century were not, indeed, marked by great industrial activity; but they saw the formation of the General Federation of Trade Unions and of the Labour Representation Committee.

This coincidence of time does not, of course, settle the question of cause and effect. If Union activity helped to bring about these advances in wages, it is no less true that the favourable opportunities presented by periods of good trade helped to call forth this activity. It is impossible to disentangle cause and effect. Unions cannot raise wages unless the economic conditions are in their favour; but even favourable economic conditions may not bring better wages where Unionism is lethargic or non-existent. The trade revival of the early 'eighties produced no wage advances, and the cause, at least in part, was Trade Union lethargy.

The whole period of fifty years dealt with in this volume really falls into two periods of rapid economic advance, separated by a period of acute depression. From 1850 to the middle 'seventies British Capitalism passed through what we have called its "Golden Age." By the end of this period money wages had risen by more than half over the level of 1850, and real wages by at least a third. Then came the period of the great depression, extending, with only a brief interval of good trade in the early 'eighties, from the late 'seventies to the late 'eighties. Over this period money wages fell

in nearly all trades; but owing to the rapid fall in prices no decline in real wages, apart from loss of earnings through unemployment, was experienced. Then followed the great revival of 1889, bringing big advances in both money and real wages. The slump of the early 'nineties caused some reduction in both; but then the upward movement was sharply resumed. Between the late 'eighties and the end of the century both real and money wages rose by at least 20 per cent. In all, as we have seen, the rise in real wages during the latter half of the century was, on the average of all trades for which particulars are available, certainly not less than 70 per cent.

This rise was by no means equally distributed among the different groups of workers. The heaviest increases seem to have been secured by the cotton operatives, whose wages were approximately doubled during the half century. These, of course, had been among the most desperately exploited of the wage-workers during the first part of the century. According to Mr. Wood, the average earnings of all classes of cotton operatives in 1850 were about 9*s*. 4*d*. a week. By 1880 they had risen to 14*s*. 10*d*., and by 1900 to 18*s*. 3*d*. The workers in the wool industry, on the other hand, better paid in 1850, got only about 40 per cent. more in 1900 than in 1850. Carpenters' money wages actually advanced by less than 25 per cent. between 1850 and 1900.

In mining and iron and steel work, wages rose rather more than the average, and in the building trades considerably more. In engineering, the rise was about the average; but there was a considerable up-grading of unskilled workers to semi-skilled work. On the whole, the constructional trades, on account of their great expansion, tended to improve their relative position. But they were also subject to abnormally heavy fluctuations in wages, owing to their exceptional liability to booms and slumps. This is most marked of all in the mining industry. In the middle 'seventies mining wages rose to 90 per cent. of the 1900 level. Five years later they had fallen to 70 per cent. This extreme fluctuation, of course, largely explains the prevalence of mining strikes and lock-outs.

The third diagram accompanying this chapter shows, in so far as particulars are available, the growth of the Trade Union and Co-operative Movements. There are no figures of total Trade

Union membership before 1892, when the Board of Trade first issued a general return. But from 1866 onwards we have the numbers represented at the annual Trades Union Congresses. These do not at any point show the full strength of the movement; for there were always Unions not affiliated to Congress, or affiliated on less than their full numbers. For the later period, the relation between the two sets of figures can be seen by comparing them on the chart. For the first few years the Congress figures bear little relation to total Trade Union membership; for it was only by gradual stages that the Congress established its position. The first figures of any real significance are those of 1869.

The Co-operative figures are drawn throughout from official sources, and show the membership of Co-operative Societies of all types registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Acts. The point of interest is to observe their steady growth in comparison with the ups and downs of Trade Union membership. Co-operative Societies are, of course, affected in some degree by the fluctuations of trade. But these do not influence their membership to anything like the same extent as that of the Trade Unions. The Trade Union Movement goes forward in a series of violent jerks; the Co-operative Movement is relatively slow and steady in its advance. But the tendency of both movements is upward, and, on the whole, at a not markedly different rate.

Over the same period there was, of course, at least as considerable a growth of organisation among the employers. Employers' Associations sprang up to cope with the rising Trade Unions, and, especially towards the end of the century, there was a marked growth of trusts and combines formed for the purpose of regulating prices and output. The attitude and organisation of the employing class was no less responsive than those of Labour to changes in the economic conditions. *Laissez-faire* was abandoned as a principle by capitalists as much as by workers.

The growth of relatively stable Trade Unions and of a stable Co-operative Movement is but one of the signs of a marked change in the habits and outlook of the British workers during the latter part of the century. Though by 1900 the Trade Unions were gradually discarding their "Lib-Lab" policy and Socialism had become a real and powerful force among them, much that they had learned in the Victorian era remained with them as a lasting

acquisition. General elementary education, of course, had made a huge difference to manners, habits and social outlook. The rise in wages had made possible ways of living which were beyond the reach of the workers during the bad times of the Industrial Revolution. The improvement in sanitary conditions had profoundly altered, save for the unfortunate slum-dwellers, the conditions of urban life. The sort of appeals which had roused the workers in the 'thirties and 'forties would have made no impression on their successors in the latter part of the century. Though there were still, even in 1900, many thousands of hopelessly exploited " bottom dogs," such as Charles Booth's famous survey had brought to common knowledge ten years before, these were not typical of the organised or organisable working class. In the great industries, the workers had ceased to be a ragged and starving mob, easily roused, either by a Feargus O'Connor or a James Rayner Stephens, or by some one of the many " Messiahs " who sprang up in the early years of the century. They had acquired a status, and in many cases a little " stake in the country," if only to the extent of a few pounds in the " Co-op."

No longer were mass uprisings, huge sudden revolts bred of despair and spreading like wildfire none knew how, likely or even possible. Strikes had become, for the most part, orderly movements, prepared for in advance and conducted by organised bodies and under duly constituted leadership. The orators of the Social Democratic Federation thundered revolution in vain; the evolutionary Socialism of the I.L.P. made a far greater appeal. But it did not rouse the mass; it set itself to win over the individuals one by one. Socialist propaganda had become far less an appeal to emotions and instincts, and far more an appeal to reason. O'Connor had been hot as hell; Sidney Webb was always as cool as a cucumber.

This is not said by way of praise or blame, but merely as a true account of what had happened. There were working-class leaders in the first part of the nineteenth century as clever, as well-read, and as educated as any since. But the average level of culture immensely changed. In the early days, there was a small minority that read Owen and Carlyle, and a far wider minority that appreciated Cobbett. In the latter part of the century Darwin and Spencer and Huxley were making their mark on working-class

thought to an extent that would have been impossible before the coming of popular education.

In certain respects, the wide differences of education hampered the working-class propagandists. In the early part of the century, the workers were left to provide their own newspapers because it was not worth anyone else's while to provide for them. The work of Brougham and Charles Knight, of the *Penny Magazine*, was the beginning of the change. The Mechanics' Institutes, in the 'twenties, and the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, in the 'thirties, set themselves to teach the workers what it was good for them to know. But these were subsidised and propagandist, and not commercial, ventures.

The coming of popular education altered the whole position. It became worth while, commercially, to provide reading matter for the poor as well as the rich. The result was seen in a flood of cheap novels, cheap magazines, cheap newspapers. The commercial classes vied with the working-class propagandists in catering for the workers' reading. With ample resources behind them, they made it far harder for the Socialists to maintain a press of their own, or to get the workers' ear. Such papers as *Reynolds' Newspaper*, which began as a Chartist organ, were commercialised. Propagandist papers had a hard struggle, and failures were many. *The Beehive* was often at the point of death. After the rise of Socialism, *Justice* and the *Labour Leader* did not pay. Only *The Clarion*, through Robert Blatchford's special genius as a popular writer, established itself as a commercial success.

To a great extent, in habits and way of life, the upper strata of the workers became assimilated to the lesser middle class. To be a Trade Union leader became a respectable calling. Even the "New" Unionism of 1889, which started up as a revolt against the respectability of the "Lib-Labs," became respectable in due course. It could not be otherwise. By the end of the century, Socialism itself had become respectable. And all this had happened precisely because the working-class standard of living had risen to a point which made respectability possible.

In this volume, the story has been brought down to 1900. At the next stage of our survey we shall see that, with the turn of the century, the long-continued rise in the working-class standard of living suffered a sharp check, and real wages began to fall. The

new Imperialism which we have seen rising, step by step, with the development of the coal and metal industries, began to show more clearly its consequences in international rivalries, the race of armaments, and intensified economic competition. But with these developments we are not here concerned. During the Victorian era, it is beyond doubt that working-class standards were very greatly improved, and that the main body of the workers successfully emerged from the utter ruin which had overtaken them during the Industrial Revolution. Hope replaced despair; criticism superseded revolt. Hyndman sought to revive the Chartist agitation; but the Socialism of the 'nineties was a very different thing from the Chartism of the 'thirties, and made an essentially different appeal.

BOOKS

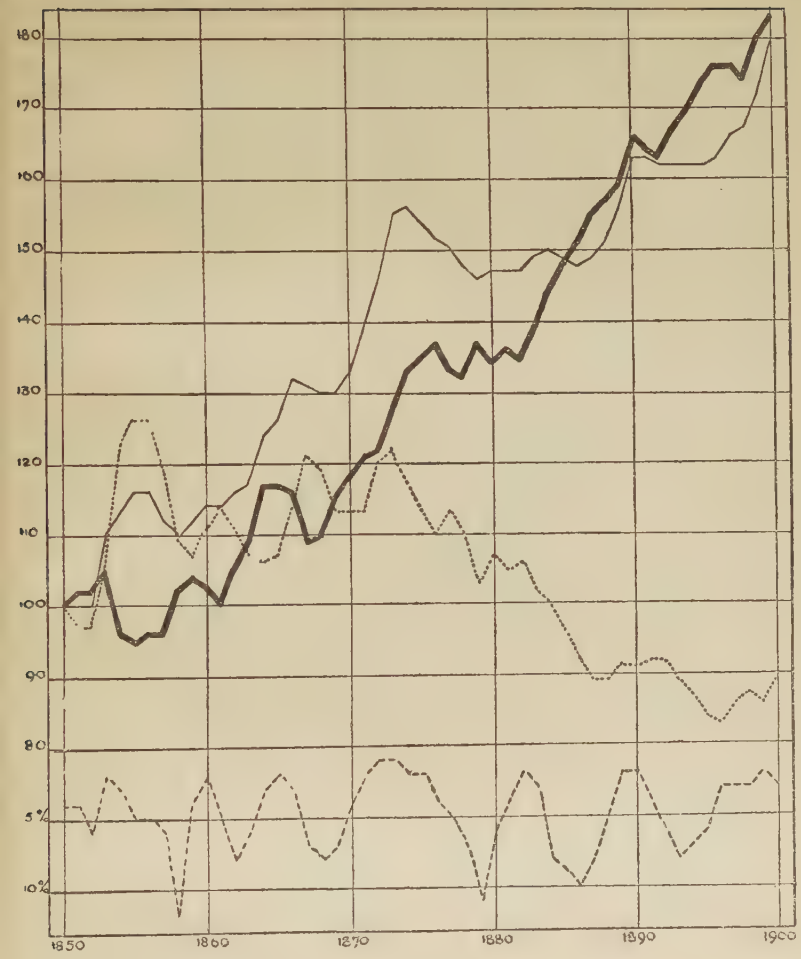
Bowley. History of Wages in the Nineteenth Century.
Bowley. National Progress in Wealth and Trade.
Layton. Introduction to the Study of Prices.
Porter and Hirst. The Progress of the Nation.
Wood. History of Wages in the Cotton Trade.
Webb. Labour in the Longest Reign.

CHARTS AND FIGURES

WAGES, PRICES AND UNEMPLOYMENT, 1850–1900.

Date.	Per cent. of 1850.			Employment per cent. (*i.e.* Unemployment reversed).
	Retail Prices.	Money Wages.	Real Wages.	
1850	100	100	100	96
1851	97	100	102	96
1852	97	100	102	94
1853	106	110	105	98
1854	122	114	96	97
1855	126	116	95	95
1856	126	116	96	95
1857	119	112	96	94
1858	109	110	102	88
1859	107	112	104	96
1860	111	114	103	98
1861	114	114	100	95
1862	111	116	105	92
1863	107	117	109	94
1864	106	124	117	97
1865	107	126	117	98
1866	114	132	116	97
1867	121	131	109	93
1868	119	130	110	92
1869	113	130	115	93
1870	113	133	118	96
1871	113	138	121	98
1872	120	146	122	99
1873	122	155	128	99
1874	117	156	133	98
1875	113	154	135	98
1876	110	152	137	96
1877	113	151	133	95
1878	110	148	132	93
1879	103	146	137	89
1880	107	147	134	94
1881	105	147	136	96
1882	106	147	135	98
1883	102	149	139	97
1884	100	150	144	92
1885	96	149	148	91
1886	92	148	151	90
1887	89	149	155	92
1888	89	151	157	95
1889	91	156	159	98
1890	91	163	166	98
1891	92	163	164	96
1892	92	162	163	94
1893	89	162	167	92
1894	87	162	170	93
1895	84	162	174	94
1896	83	163	176	97
1897	86	166	176	97
1898	87	167	174	97
1899	86	172	180	98
1900	89	179	183	97

WAGES, PRICES AND UNEMPLOYMENT, 1850–1900.



[1850 = 100].

▬ Real wages. — Money wages. .... Retail prices

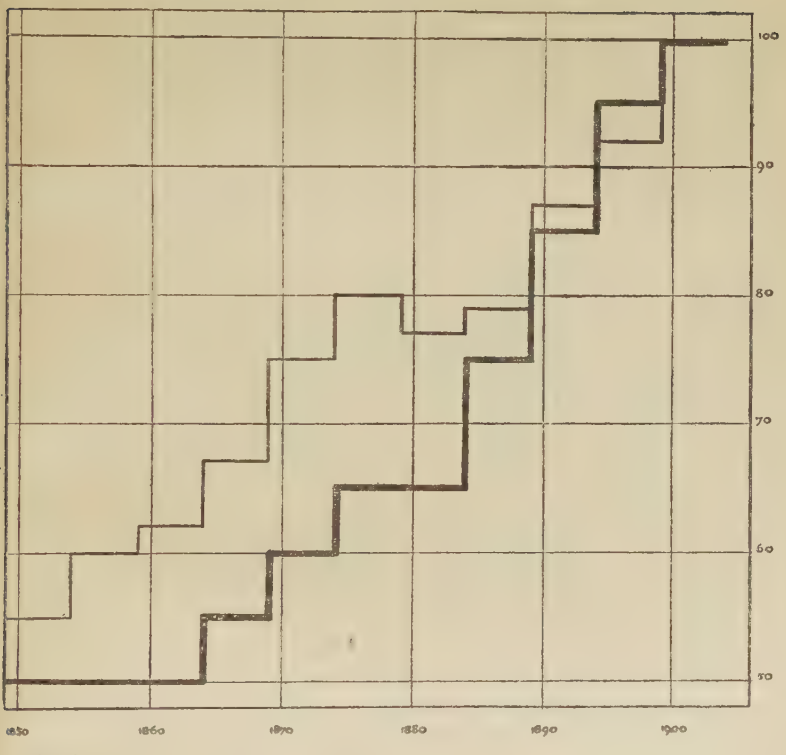
- - - - Percentage of trade unionists unemployed (reversed).

NOMINAL AND REAL WAGES, 1850–1900.

Professor Bowley's Estimate.

Date.	Nominal Wages.	Real Wages.
1850–1854	55	50
1855–1859	60	50
1860–1864	62	50
1865–1869	67	55
1870–1874	75	60
1875–1879	80	65
1880–1884	77	65
1885–1889	79	75
1890–1894	87	85
1895–1899	92	95
1900–1904	100	100

NOMINAL AND REAL WAGES, 1850–1900.
Professor Bowley's Estimate.

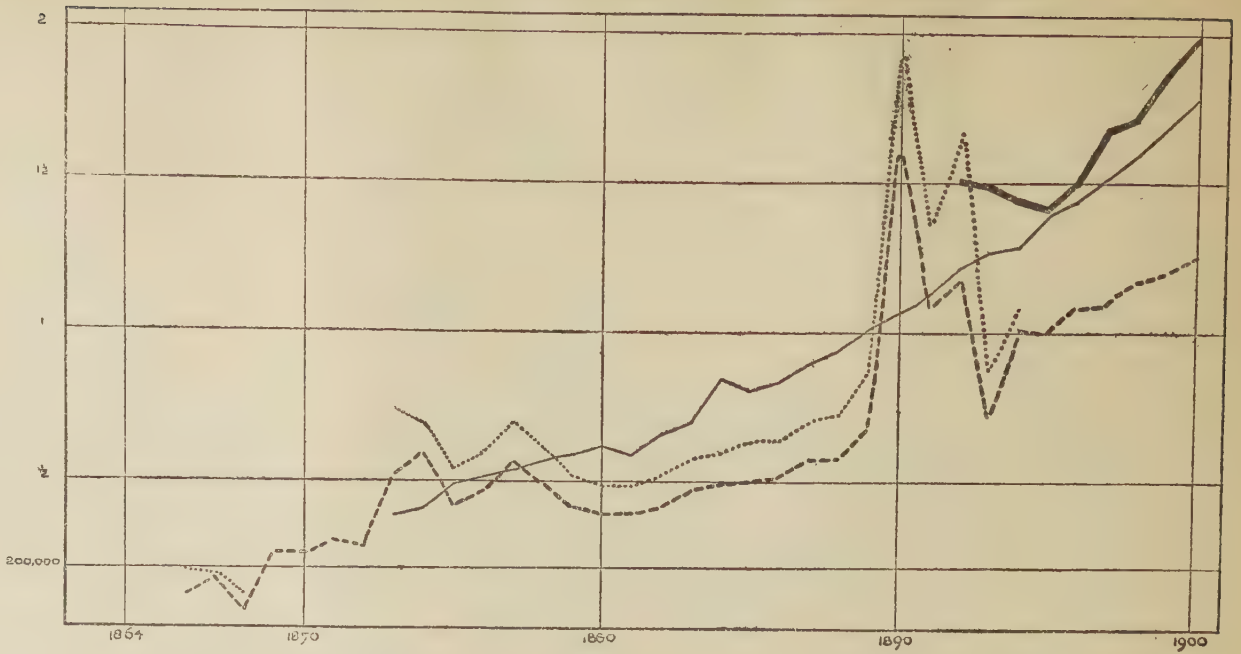


Real wages. — Money wages.
[Average of 1900–1904 = 100.]

MEMBERSHIP OF TRADE UNIONS AND CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES.

	Membership in Thousands.					Membership in Thousands.			
	All Trade Unions.	Trades Union Congress.		Co-operative Societies.		All Trade Unions.	Trades Union Congress.		Co-operative Societies.
		Unions only.	Total.				Unions only.	Total.	
1866 .	—	110	199	—	1884 .	—	488	598	848
1867 .	—	155	193	—	1885 .	—	500	631	802
1868 .	—	50	114	—	1886 .	—	515	638	834
1869 .	—	250	—	—	1887 .	—	561	696	895
1870 .	—	—	—	—	1888 .	—	568	727	942
1871 .	—	289	—	—	1889 .	—	687	863	1,012
1872 .	—	270	—	—	1890 .	—	1,593	1,927	1,054
1873 .	—	509	735	388	1891 .	—	1,094	1,354	1,126
1874 .	—	594	695	413	1892 .	1,501	1,155	1,651	1,221
1875 .	—	414	531	480	1893 .	1,479	721	871	1,266
1876 .	—	455	577	508	1894 .	1,439	1,015	1,081	1,285
1877 .	—	565	695	529	1895 .	1,407	1,000	—	1,394
1878 .	—	486	622	561	1896 .	1,493	1,076	—	1,437
1879 .	—	412	522	573	1897 .	1,669	1,093	—	1,521
1880 .	—	381	476	604	1898 .	1,702	1,184	—	1,597
1881 .	—	—	—	596	1899 .	1,861	1,200	—	1,685
1882 .	—	404	507	654	1900 .	1,972	1,250	—	1,778
1883 .	—	467	561	681					

MEMBERSHIP OF TRADE UNIONS AND CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES.



Membership of all Trade Unions.
Membership of Trades Union Congress (trade unions only).
Membership of Trades Union Congress (total membership).
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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY THE WHITEFRIARS PRESS, LTD.,
LONDON AND TONBRIDGE.